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As Having
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ish, American,

Mr. W. B. Smith.

August 1891.

W. B.
Oakley

AS HAVING NOTHING



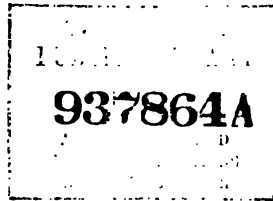
AS HAVING NOTHING

BY

HESTER CALDWELL OAKLEY

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK & LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1898

H. G. W.



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*“I shall be satisfied
If only the dreams abide.”*



AS HAVING NOTHING

CHAPTER I

THE YEAR'S AT THE SPRING !

Here 's to the joy of a first success
Paltry and poor tho' it be !
The throb of the fresh young heart, elate !
'T will never return to thee.

Triumphs in plenty and honors piled,
To the satiate laurel-crowned,
But—the thrill of a nameless, first success
To the heart still unrenowned !

BOSTON, MASS., April 20th.

MISS ELIZABETH WALLACE,

“The Velasquez,” 55th Street, New York
City.

Dear Miss Wallace:—We beg to acknowledge receipt of the three drawings for *An*

Idyll of the Queen, which are more than satisfactory, and for which we enclose our check for one hundred dollars (\$100).

We are sending you, this morning, per registered mail, a manuscript entitled *The Will of the Wisp*, by Calvert Dodge, for which we would like twelve full-page illustrations, to be reduced to three and one-half by five inches, at your earliest convenience, and your own terms.

If it is impossible for you to undertake the work, kindly let us know at once, and oblige,

Yours very truly,

LINTON, WEST, & Co., Publishers.

On opening the lock-box at her studio door, Elizabeth Wallace had recognized the business heading of the envelope and torn it open with an impatient finger, which she was apt to use instead of the extremely ready little paper-cutter hanging at her waist. Her unreliable imagination divined some complaint of the drawings which she had mailed to that address

the week before, and foresaw further maddening delay in a much-needed remittance, which was, in fact, already far spent in advance.

While she stood waiting for the elevator, which partook of the dilatory nature of the ease-loving colored boy who operated it, she had read, marked, and learned every word of the cordial enclosure ; and now, with the letter tucked under her belt, where its crisp rustle as she moved suggested pleasurably a promise of brave bank notes to come, she turned into the Park at Fifty-Ninth Street, and walked briskly along, occupied in inwardly digesting the good news which meant numberless little indulgences for two appreciative people, as well as their daily bread.

It was all that she could do to keep her feet dignified, for little ripples of joy which had their well-spring in her heart went rollicking through her veins until every nerve danced in sympathy and her muscles ached to do the same. The childish disproportion of her elation to its cause, which was only a natural,

well-earned outcome of previous labor, tickled her sense of humor; and as she moved on, with that long, free step, peculiar to tall, unconscious, perfectly developed womanhood, she remonstrated with herself in happy scorn.

“A pretty sight for the staid old Knickerbockers you would be, Elizabeth Wallace, turned of twenty-three, if you went prancing through Central Park as you want to. I am ashamed of you! Where is the poise you have been complimented upon so often, you hypocritical fraud? Is this the calm, I’ve-been-expecting-you fashion in which you planned to greet Success when she appeared? Have n’t you known all along that you would meet her face to face, some morning? And did n’t you say to yourself, when those other three drawings went off, that they were good, *good*, GOOD, and would lead to something better?

“Only illustrating, too! Any one would think from the way your heart leaps that this was a triumph of the first water, Why it

could not beat more joyfully if you had been given a Fellowship at the Champ-de-Mars for one of the inspired pictures which you mean to paint some day. Do you mean to paint them though, or does this mean that advertising has lowered your ideals, and that you have grown short-sighted enough to think that profitable illustrating is the *summum bonum* ? Looked at with your old, clear mind's eyes, this is no triumph at all—not even a paltry one. It is nothing more than you deserve, you head-working, poverty-stricken, ambitious creature ! And why you should feel as if you were living in a fairy-tale and your godmother had just touched the pumpkin, I don't know,—unless the spring has gone to your head.”

She had chosen the most unfrequented paths—paths every step of which held a lovable intimacy ; for these daily walks of hers had been the real thinking, feeling times of her life of late. While at work, she grew absorbed with a close concentration that shut out all thought except that connected with her pencil and brush ; and

at home, the constant, loving demand which her mother made upon her again shut out more personal reveries, which needed solitude to formulate themselves. At the studio she lavished upon her work, and at home, upon her mother, a single-hearted devotion which admitted of no self-analysis whatever. Perhaps it was just as well; but at all events, she had taken the trees, the rocks, the open sky, the tame little mendicant squirrels and birds into her confidence, into communion with her often unrealized moods, with an unconscious self-abandon which she had given to no human being since her father had died, three years before.

To-day was a day to make the heart sing for pure joy of living—all sordid, monetary conditions of life aside. The miracle of awakening warmth, and its gradual revealing of Nature's great, glad soul, was going on all about her with that mystery of development that one feels so keenly in early April, when the branches are bare—no, they are not!—yes,

they are !—and one brushes a hand across the eyes to discover if the soft film that is born of still invisible foliage is not the fault of the eyes themselves. In a few days the blossoms would come, pushing out eagerly and trustfully ahead of the more cautious leaves. And then the trees would be great, soft, bridal bouquets for the musical, mating birds to nest in.

Elizabeth drank it all in, the beauty that was, and the pledge of beauty to be. Her dark head was held high, with the resolute, independent chin raised, but the long, hazel eyes, in which the April sunlight seemed not so much mirrored as caught, looked dancingly across the green expanse and saluted the reservoir tower which reared its picturesque crest to the right. "Castle in Spain, you seem closer to-day," she whispered happily, as she left the Park.

A few minutes later she had let herself into the tiny, West-Side apartment, and swooped down with long pent-up exuberance upon a little, elderly woman, who was sewing at a

north window, from which, through the vista formed by neighboring apartment houses, a refreshing glimpse of the Park was visible.

"Which would you rather have, Mother-love,—a diamond tiara, or a pearl carriage?" she demanded, with hysterical appreciation of the consternation in the little woman's face.

"Which would you rather have,—a famous daughter whose *chefs-d'œuvres* decorated horse-cars and the backs of magazines, or a child whose pictures were shut up unobtrusively between genteel book-covers?"

"What do you mean, Elizabeth, dear? You're tired and nervous. Lie down for a little while. It is all the result of your disagreeable interview with that advertising man. I am sure nothing could be prettier or more suitable than your soap poster."

"Oh, Mother dear! don't look so worried or you'll upset my centre of gravity completely. You are so funny when you get excited. I'm not the least bit daft or nervous either. I'm simply—high-spirited and successful. Allow

me to present to you the renowned illustrator of that clever new book, *The Will of the Wisp*, published by Linton, West, Co., \$1.50 per volume."

Then with a sudden change and a swift return to the sweet gravity which her pure brow and resolute chin promised, the mocking sprite fled from her eyes and laughing mouth ; and in a minute the whole matter was explained, to Mrs. Wallace's intense delight and satisfaction.

Elizabeth sat down on the floor by her mother's side, and drew the work softly from the delicate, ringed fingers, saying, while she kissed them with a rare and playful tenderness : " Not another stitch, *Madre*. You do altogether too much for this untidy artist of yours. This dimity goes straight to Miss Brian, in company with a darling black and white lawn, at the extravagant price of ten cents a yard, which I have set my heart upon seeing you appear in, with no delay. Let her make them up in honor of the occasion. I *must* have my ex-

travagant fling after each check, you know, and this time my dissipation shall be a dress-maker's bill."

" But, Elizabeth, I love to do it. I feel so useless doing nothing. And sewing seems to be my only chance of making money, by saving it, since my talented daughter has all the brains of the family."

" Nonsense ! Brains indeed ! You are my inspiration, and it is you, and you alone, who have made me the shining light I am ; you who have managed and toiled and spun to keep me, not only presentable, but clothed with the 'purple and fine linen' that give me the appearance wherewith to impress susceptible publishers and advertisers,—even if it does make me feel like an impostor at times. Clothes are invaluable ! Some day I am going to write an essay on the subject. If I were left to myself I'd be as artistic a rag-bag as any of the Quartier freaks in the Paris studios, lose my self-respect, and, like the veriest Bohemian, slave over my ridiculously ideal con-

ceptions, instead of being the well-dressed Philistine I am now, with style and poise enough to be business-like and yet artistic ; to indulge in a few mild pomps and vanities and not cultivate my Bohemian instincts at the risk of my self-respect, and finally to keep alive that instinct of *noblesse oblige* which rules you with such an iron sceptre, dear."

" Oh, Betty, not that ! But I do think you owe it to your father, to your training, and your education, not to mention your capabilities and connections, not to let trouble and poverty make you careless."

" I know it, *Madre mia*, but I owe it most of all to you, dear. You are the only connection I care the least bit about. The rest may go to Halifax, for all of me ! Thank Heaven, they are all in England, and too far away to watch and criticize the goings-on of this revolutionary daughter of a noble house. As for Father,"—and her gay voice fell, with a swiftly reverent intonation,—“ Father knows that I mean right whatever I do, or say, or

seem. I have no more confidence in God's understanding my motives, than in Father's comprehension." It was indicative of a certain strain of indomitable loyalty in the girl's nature that Elizabeth had never ceased to use the present tense in speaking of her father, whose life, touched by death, had seemed to the wife so irreparably ended, except as an indefinitely changed existence in an infinitely removed and hazy heaven.

"Oh, Elizabeth!" pleaded Mrs. Wallace, in the reproachful tone with which she met, and strove to check these incomprehensible, and therefore seemingly sacrilegious, tendencies of her strange daughter.

The girl smiled. "Forgive me, dear. But most people's idea of God is so infinitely below my knowledge of Father; so much less wise and broad-minded and tender. However, that is neither here nor there. What people think God is, does not make Him so, except for themselves."

"I don't understand," answered Mrs. Wal-

lace, with a puzzled expression, "God is the same for every one. What people think He is has nothing to do with it, Elizabeth."

"*This* world is inevitably what we think and make it," mused the girl, drawing her straight brows together; "why not the next? I believe we all get what we expect. Does n't this prove it?" with a quick change to the practical, which was an evident relief to Mrs. Wallace, who had dreaded Elizabeth's speculative moods since she was a mere baby, and had told her it was "such a refreshment to be naughty."

"I am sure I have felt myself to be a genius at least once a day for the past three years—ever since I first put my Grecian nose down to the artistic grindstone, and turned it into the inadequate apology for the feature it now is," rubbing it thoughtfully. "However, they say that clever women almost invariably have short noses,—Aman Jean used to say, '*le nez est le clef de la tête, mademoiselle,*' and the more valuable the treasure, the more insignificant and small the key, you know,—so in time you may

expect me to be entirely minus that interesting appendage, if I keep on at this astonishing rate of progress. Twelve full-page illustrations, at—let me see—my own terms. Hum—um—fifty dollars, at the least, apiece,—twelve full-page,—that's six hundred dollars at the inside calculation, Mother dear. And I am positive I can do them in short order, I'm 'that smoothed at the turn things are taking,' as nurse used to say. And, meanwhile, we have this hundred to splurge with," and she waved the bit of paper blithely over her head. "We can soon use the Southern Railroads to buy you bon-bons, sweetest."

The proof-sheets arrived by the evening mail and, after dinner, Elizabeth sat down, and proceeded to skim through the pages, preparatory to formulating her ideas for composition. She had not read far before she uttered a quick exclamation: "Mother, it's the oddest thing, but I verily believe the heroine of this story is going to be the exact counterpart of Joan Whetmore. Listen to this:

“ ‘A girl whom many professed to know, and whom few, if any, actually did. One whose eyes dreamed, while her mouth laughed ; with a brow like a nun's hidden under a frivolous film of curls ; with a complexion of the delicacy and pathos of a little child's ; a chin like a cherub's, a head as wise as the Sphinx, and a heart like an unopened flower. Oh, a bundle of contradictions was the Wisp ! ’ Now, is n't that Joan all over again ? I am going to ask her to pose for me, and, like the blessed saint she is, I 'm sure she will be more than glad to do it.”

“ Of course she will, dear,” answered Mrs. Wallace, loyally ; “ any one would be flattered, I am sure. You do such beautiful things.”

“ Oh, Mother, you delicious old lady ! I believe you think no one ever possessed a grain of talent before your gifted daughter appeared upon the scene. If I am conceited, as some people have been cruel enough to hint at times, it's all your fault. Take care, or you will stultify me completely. Mr. Lasar

used to say, last summer, that there were two sorts of families, and both equally deadly—the kind that think their artistic ugly ducklings are all swans, and the kind that consider them absolutely devoid of sense, and give them up in despair because they don't turn out finished chromos. 'Work it out alone, work it out with yourself and Nature,' he used to say, 'and then, in a few years, when you're famous, they'll all be saying, I told you so.'

"Elizabeth!" came the mild reproach, which always acted like a warning check-rein when the fun-loving girl gave vent to a bit too frolicsome a humor. "You know I always said so from the very first."

Elizabeth jumped up, and crossing the little room with three long steps, she leaned over and pressed a tender kiss on the puzzled face lifted to meet it.

"Mother dear," she said, with a throb of protecting love, "what would I do without you to spoil me?"

"You are so like your father, Betty," sighed

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Mrs. Wallace, with a reminiscent cadence in her voice ; while the girl settled down to her reading again, and soon grew absorbed, her face flushing with interest as she proceeded.

The soft breeze blew in at the open window, and ruffled her dark hair to a shadowy looseness. The mother leaned back in her chair and watched the picture lovingly. How delicate and firm and heavily lashed Elizabeth's eyelids were, with the quick glancing life flashing beneath, as she absorbed page after page with a quickness of perception which again reminded Mrs. Wallace of her husband.



CHAPTER II

THE COMMON PROBLEM

“ The common problem—yours, mine, every one’s—
Is not to fancy what were fair in life,
Provided it could be : but finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means—a very different thing ! ”

M R. WALLACE had died three years before in Italy, where he had held a diplomatic position for four years before his death. Thus it had happened that his only daughter, Elizabeth, released from school-life at Farmington when but eighteen, had gone abroad directly to join her parents, and made Italy her home for the next two years. The beauty and insidious charm of that most enchanting of southern climes, had inoculated her with the undying nostalgia which all Italians

feel for the land of their birth, and she had loved this adopted country far more than any one who knew her, dreamed ; except, perhaps her father, who, under his reserved, self-reliant exterior, held in leash the same untamed enthusiasm for beauty and vivid life with a control which Elizabeth at first unconsciously, later understandingly, had appreciated and imitated as far back as she could remember.

Her life abroad during those two years had been full to the brim of developing experience. During the summer, they had travelled after the most ideally inconsequent fashion, fastening, like lichens, upon congenial soil, absorbing the very life of places that appealed to them ; and shunning with wayward independence whatever bored or wearied them—no matter how famous and world-renowned it might be.

Mr. Wallace, upon his first trip abroad, some thirty years previous, had met and married a beautiful English girl, whose family had strongly disapproved of the American alliance. This opposition had lent such an unwonted

strength of character to the girl, and such intensity of self-revelation to the man, that both, after the marriage was finally achieved, had realized a certain disillusionment.

Mrs. Wallace had relapsed into her original and natural role of a beautiful, delicately reared woman, with a gentle, yielding, confident disposition, and a certain absence of humor which was in itself most humorous. Her husband, who in his fierce, irresistible wooing, had torn the tendrils of her life away from their accustomed support, had assumed again, in the security of his first happiness, an almost superhuman control of that inner self which he had revealed violently in the face of a feared denial of his love. When, little by little, he came to realize that his wife's response to his true nature had been only momentary, that she could never fill his life in the complete sense of the word, his self-control, in place of being assumed, became habitual, and the holy of holies in his great reserved soul, was locked away ; while over its charming outer courts his

wife held gracious, sovereign sway, guarded by an infinite tenderness, which perhaps developed and strengthened the man as much as would the absolute soul sympathy of which he had dreamed for a brief interval.

Who knows ! Perhaps if he had not unconsciously looked for intuitive comprehension in the woman who loved him ; if he had, from the first, continued to reveal himself as in the early days of their romantic courtship ; or if, on the other hand, his wife had not allowed the change to affect her shrinking disposition, but had penetrated voluntarily and uninvited into those inner rooms while only an unlocked door swung between, ere it was barred too firmly for her light touch to move, life might have been very different for them both. Who knows ! But as it was, the mistake—if mistake it had been—once made, could never be rectified ; and in a short time the changed conditions grew irremediable.

Mrs. Wallace was proud of her husband ; proud of his appearance, his standing, and his

intellect. She relied childishly on his protecting tenderness ; and, once in a while, she would furtively draw out a small package of old letters, and blush over the ardent love they expressed, almost as if they had been written by some lost lover, even to think of whom seemed an act disloyal and unfaithful to her grave, self-contained husband.

When Elizabeth was a little girl, she often wondered why it was that her father seemed so different when she was alone with him. At such times, he was the veriest boy, with an un-failing fund of sympathy and spontaneous *camaraderie* that made him her dearest friend and playfellow, as well as her idol and hero. During those last two years spent abroad, she grew, in an undefined way, to understand the reason. Loving her beautiful mother, as she did, with a passionate admiration, there crept gradually into this feeling the same tenderly protective element which was so strong in her father ; and when the great wrench had come, the relation of mother and daughter seemed to

be reversed, and Elizabeth's chief aim and desire in life grew to be to spare her mother all the inconvenience and discomfort consequent upon their changed circumstances. Mr. Wallace had left almost nothing. By a sad and luckless combination of affairs, his investments, one after the other, although seemingly wise and safe, failed to succeed; and just after his death, a large interest in a promising Western mine, their chief reliance, had become worthless, through a sudden inundation which rendered its development utterly impossible without the expenditure of a fabulous sum, which was not forthcoming.

All that they now had left, beside a small life insurance, was a few shares in some Southern railroads, which paid a trifling four hundred dollars a year. Something must be done; and, obviously, Elizabeth had to do it. And why not? Elizabeth had youth, abounding, resilient health and good spirits; and, at the bottom of her soul, a perfect dragon of ambition that hitherto had shown itself only

in an unprecedented popularity at school and with the brilliant, but rather heterogeneous, foreign society in which she had moved.

The English relatives came eagerly to the fore, with a generosity which one is tempted to think was prompted by Elizabeth's beauty, and the tacit assurance it gave of a great matrimonial future if properly put upon the market, rather than the disinterested charity they professed. It was all planned for them suavely, and indeed most kindly. Mrs. Wallace and her daughter were to make their home in England, with the eldest branch, and when the period of Elizabeth's mourning had expired, she was to be introduced to her adopted sovereign, and given "every advantage of a London season." Mrs. Wallace sighed with gentle resignation, as happy as she could be in her desolate widowhood, at this safe and more than respectable way out of their difficulties.

But lo ! Elizabeth flapped the wings of her dawning independence, and dormant genius, and "flew straight in the face of Providence,"

as the very stiff-necked and very aristocratic aunt, from whom the suggestion emanated, somewhat egotistically, but perhaps excusably, put it.

At school Elizabeth had studied art, and soon leaped far beyond the teaching of the conscientious, but rather limited artist, who at that time presided over the Farmington studio. Her talent had been considered something wonderful by the girls, and even among their elders, and she had been very seriously urged to develop it when she left.

This she had determined to do herself ; but the dream-begetting, procrastinating spirit of the South had held her entranced during those two happy years, which were, however, not wholly lost, since she had breathed in beauty at every pore, absorbing it like a sponge until such time as she should be so weighted with her appreciation of nature, that it must needs escape as art. All that time she had scarcely drawn a line, but at her father's instigation, she had studied and learned to appreciate, with

the finest discrimination, the thought and technique of every artist worthy of the name, the fruit of whose toil and genius hung luscious and beautiful in the different galleries of Europe. Now, she suddenly gave voice to a startling and daring decision. They would take the life-insurance and migrate to Paris where she would invest it in tuition fees and artists' materials. All of which, she assured her mother, with a confidence not to be resisted, would pay back compound interest, before long, in the salable work which it would enable her to produce.

Mrs. Wallace yielded,—of course she yielded. She even grew to believe that the suggestion was of her own making, so interested and absorbed did she grow in Elizabeth's progress, which was almost phenomenal.

What a busy, never-to-be-forgotten, happy, never-to-be-equalled time that had been, when they lived "with the sparrows among the spires," *au cinquième*, of *numero dix*, *Square du Froissart*, that highly respectable outpost

on the coast of Bohemia. Mrs. Wallace and Elizabeth, searching with discouraged feet for an abiding place, (since pensions were either too hopelessly exorbitant in their prices, or too hopelessly cheap in their accommodations), had come on this majestic pile, built about an immaculate paved courtyard, and exclusively enclosed behind an imposing mediæval gateway. Indulging a whim of Elizabeth's, they had inquired the price of apartments there, and found, to their boundless satisfaction, one tiny gem, which proved, after careful consideration of ways and means, actually within their modest reach. Then, what makeshifts and marvels of economical furnishing ; what laughable playing at marketing ; what doll's house-keeping in the four, wee rooms, with their delightfully inappropriate French grandeur of slippery hard-wood floors and huge, gilt mantel mirrors, their infinitesimal fireplaces, and their gaping window casements, which had to be piped with felt, to keep out the biting, penetrating Paris weather ! What novel and

stimulating studio companionship with the clique of girl students, clever, busy, inconsistently miserable and happy at one and the same time over their absorbing work, of every nationality under the sun, with their jargon of art talk, their aims, and their eccentricities,—above all, their eccentricities !

There was comfortable, red-cheeked, slow-moving little Gretchen, she of the coral necklace, the atrocious hats, and the breathtaking talent, whose masterly sway over her charcoal earned her the studio nickname of Holbein ; the pale little Pole, with the lonely eyes and the fiery temperament of her race, who, upon her first visit to Elizabeth and her mother in the cosey apartment, had burst into exile tears, exclaiming, “ *Ah, c'est le ciel !* ” and, being tenderly comforted, had ever afterwards loved them both to distraction. The tall, irritating American and the small, irritated Armenian, who daily treated the studio to alternating chills and fevers, in defence of their clashing theories on the subject of ventilation,

punctuating the silences of the poses with the savage opening and shutting of windows, to the accompaniment of such remarks as “*Ah-h-h*, you will send me to the *cimetière*!” and “*No*, for we will all be cremated, first!!” There, too, the delicate daughter of the *haute noblesse*, chaperoned to the bitter end by her long-suffering *gouvernante*, who yawned against the wall, under the rows of assorted cloaks, and read French novels, while her pathetic charge imbibed, along with her art, strange revolutionary views of *les convenances*, from the sympathetic Americans and the antipathetic English. There, came and went, at irregular intervals, the naïve nondescript in the blue glasses,—she who came, no one knew whence, remained three days, painting with sublime serenity (still in the blue glasses), abnormal figures on impossible backgrounds, and then vanished, no one knew whither, only to reappear as silently and inscrutably as before—and always in the blue glasses! There, too, sadly alien among that crowd of young,

hopeful faces, the gentle little white-haired old lady, who crept faithfully to her post, day after day, through storm or sunshine, to quiver sensitively beneath the mildest criticism, and still patiently to cover canvas after canvas, with work that made Elizabeth's heart ache with pity,—for it could never, never, never chance to be anything but hopelessly weak and mediocre. In sharp distinction to her, the tall, calm, sweet, young English girl, who painted the great soul of nature into her canvas, but who did not understand French, and so never knew it when the master went into solemn ecstasies before her studies, but stood by in an unmoved and dreamy silence, while he poured out his reverent appreciation, and the other girls waited about till he had gone, open-eyed and open-eared, like hushed devotees at a prayer-meeting, and then translated it all to her, vociferously, divided between admiration of her prowess, and exasperation over her lack of response to what they would have given all they possessed to have heard at their own easels.

In the midst of it all, Elizabeth, intuitive, receptive,—a bubbling fount of enthusiasm as her criticisms ran the ascending scale from—
“N’ ayez pas peur, mademoiselle, n’ ayez pas peur. Il faut vaincre cette timidité ! Donnez vous plus de mal. Il faut aller plus loin que ça, mademoiselle, plus loin que ça !” and “Il faut comprendre la beauté des ombres. Regardez comme c’est joli dans *la modèle*, comme ça passe,” to “Il y a des choses pas mal la dedans. Ça peut venir, mademoiselle, ça peut venir,” and “Vous avez l’oeil qui voit ! C’est vraiment artiste qui a fait ça !”

One beautiful winter given up to art for art’s sake, and then, Elizabeth, ardent lover of the ideal though she was, spent a long, practical day’s work, shut up with her account books, and emerged at the end of it, with the following astounding declaration : “This work is heavenly, Mother, but I have had enough now to know how to go on alone, and it’s not teaching me a thing that will be marketable for ages. I cannot be a famous portrait

painter in a day, and illustration is the thing I need now. It will teach me to 'formulate my ideas, and develop the pictorial instinct,' " she mimicked naughtily, "and while I am boiling the pot most of the time I can work on, in odd moments, at my beloved painting. I have heard a great deal about Lasar, who takes a summer class to Brittany every year, and lets them work in every medium under the sun, literally. They say he is full of ideas for illustration, and can help one about all the ins and outs of reproduction better than any Frenchman. So, dear, we will spend this summer in Brittany, and I shall bury my colors at the bottom of my trunk, and go into mourning for my beloved 'palette,' by using strictly black and white. Then early in the autumn, we will go home, and I, as a pupil of Merson, Collin, Aman Jean and Lasar, will do steady and remunerative work on the great New York periodicals, until we are so wealthy we can afford to come back and revel in tubs of paint and life-size canvases, and be unbusi-

ness-like and visionary to our heart's content."

And so it was—precisely as the sibyl had foretold. Only—the way of the illustrator proved hard in the beginning, and the great periodicals did not, at first glance, seem quite so impressed by her array of French names as Elizabeth had fondly dreamed. They looked kindly—yes, on the whole, very kindly—upon her portfolio of sketches, over which the eyes of a few art editors brightened visibly, although they shook their heads over the chances of such broad work reproducing well, and found fault with her medium, or paper, or both. Then they, one and all, demanded what experience she had had ; and when she answered, spiritedly, that that was the very thing she was in search of, they murmured courteously that there were many, very many, in the same position ; adding that, as her work was promising however, they would be glad to take her name and address ; and, in case anything turned up—etc., etc., etc.

No one will ever know the depths of sensitive humiliation and wounded feeling with which the young girl battled during those brief elevator trips, which shot her up to the offices of these august personages with a celerity which left her soul and confidence behind on the ground floor ; or down from their chilling presence with a sinking swiftness that landed her on the pavement almost too discouraged to continue. There were qualms too, dreadful qualms, when she fought the frightened suggestion of a more cowardly, unreliant self which whispered that she had been criminally wrong and short-sighted to use their little all, in almost its entirety, to prepare herself for a pursuit for which she was apparently not fitted.

But these moments would soon pass ; and Elizabeth would take out three little charcoal sketches, which she specially loved, and look at them till the light came back to her eyes, and the confidence to her heart. Then she would slip them back into her desk again, perfectly

reassured as to the wisdom of her decision, and the ultimate success of her work.

One fateful day, an art editor had said casually, fingering a specimen of decorative line work as he spoke: "Have you ever done any advertising illustration? This sort of thing, now, would go like wildfire for a poster or up-to-date advertisement. There is a great demand for that sort of thing just now, you know."

To be sure! Posters! Why had she not thought of that? She, who so delighted in a carefully chosen collection of the most artistic French *affiches*! She inquired more particularly, and was directed to a great advertising firm, who gave her work at once which, though miserably commonplace, paid, and paid fairly well. Soon she had all she could do of this sort of work, and the pot boiled merrily; while Elizabeth tried to stifle her artistic instincts, which she was obliged to outrage continually, and to persuade her obstreperous, ambitious Pegasus to trot contentedly in the ugly,

utilitarian harness into which the advertisers would fain force him.

On the strength of the success of her design for a soap poster in a wide competition, and the ensuing orders for similar work which had come of it, she had rented a small studio in the Velasquez Building on 55th Street, where she could pose models, and work more freely than in the small apartment where they were living. She had sent two designs to the competition, and the more mediocre had won the prize. But that was a detail which ought not to worry anyone whose aim it is to boil the pot, and Elizabeth pocketed her pride, curbed her originality, and worked early and late, turning out, like a cheerful machine, advertisements after the most approvedly crude, "chromoesque" pattern. Only the soft yellow cushions of the studio couch knew how hard it sometimes was,—and they were waterproof and showed no stains. At home, Elizabeth was her buoyant, brave and hopeful, happy self ; and Mrs. Wallace swelled

like a modest peahen at the glittering colors of her offspring, and admired everything with a faithful impartiality that acted as a mild but efficient tonic to the tired girl.

One hard thing about living in New York was—friends. At Farmington, as I have said, Elizabeth had been deservedly and undisguisedly popular, in spite of a certain personal reserve that inspired admiration oftener than intimacy; and, although she had taken no pains to let any but those dearest to her know of her return, the news was soon spread, and she was besieged in her studio by the girls who remembered her wit and charm, of old, and flooded with warm and honest entreaties to come forth and share in the winter's frivolity, adding her portion to its fun. They were enthusiastic in praise of her work, of her daring originality, and independence. She might have become a fad, had she wanted; while, if she had hinted at the real straitness of her circumstances, scores of friendly, girlish hands would have been stretched out to

help, her foreign sketches would have been bought up delightedly, and, possibly, even portrait orders would have flowed in upon her.

But,—Elizabeth was proud ; proud with the very stiffest kind of pride ; perhaps, too, a contradictory pride, which, although it made no secret of necessity in a business transaction, yet shrank, with unconquerable distaste, from being helped by a social world, through a sense of pity, before she had proved her talent, and could win the better work, because of its intrinsic merit. So she refused most of the invitations, pleading the interest of her work, her mother's loneliness, and their still recent bereavement, as very sufficient excuses ; and opening her real heart only to one.

One day, at the end of the winter, Joan Whetmore had stopped her carriage at the Velasquez, and rushed in on Elizabeth with a suddenness that surprised a despondent mood before it could be controlled. The dark head, buried in the yellow cushions, failed to hear

the light knock, and in a minute Joan was on her knees by the side of the couch.

“Dear old Beth,” she said, with that direct comfort that we all need at times, “you’re blue, I know. And it’s no use pretending to me that you are doing all this for fun. Don’t you suppose I know? Don’t you suppose I’ve wanted and ached to climb this great stone wall you’ve built up around your splendid, proud heart? You were off your guard to-day, because you thought you were alone and safe. Now I’ve rushed in where angels fear to tread; and, at the risk of deserving the name applied to such rash intruders, I am going to get to the bottom of things. Do you imagine I have forgotten all our good old talks at school? If you were working for art’s sake, don’t I know what you would be doing, precious old visionary? You would be over in Europe, with your head in the clouds, painting with yard-long brushes, instead of advertising *soap*. No, Elizabeth, you’re *dead poor*. It’s no use—don’t wriggle away from me. You know

you are ! But what in the world does it matter, I should like to know, except to make me love and admire you all the more ? Do turn over, and let me see your eyes. See if you dare to look into mine and say I'm not right."

Of course the truth came out after this, and that was the last concealment which Elizabeth ever tried to have with Joan. She was "over the garden wall" in earnest, as she laughingly declared, and their friendship was dearer and stronger than ever. Elizabeth had ended her confession by taking out the three sketches. "Here is my antidote for a mood like this," she said, somewhat shamefacedly. "When I despair of ever doing anything better, and wail over my lost ideals, I look at these. They are good, are n't they ?"

"Good ?" breathed Joan ecstatically ; "Elizabeth, they are adorable ! You must let me keep these one night—just one, please. It's a secret, but I must get an opinion which I value on them. Have you showed them to anyone yet ?"

"No, they are only sketches, you know, and I did not think they would appeal—they meant something to me, you see, but I did n't think—here! give them back to me!" she ended, snatching at the cherished sheets. But Joan was too quick for her.

"No, you sha 'n't hide your light under a bushel another minute. This is what I call genius, and I am going to take them home, and find out if I am a goose. Let me, dear, please,—for the sake of the good you say I've done you. Have I done you any good?" in a wheedling voice.

Elizabeth laughed lovingly. "Yes, indeed you have, Joan. More than you guess. Take them if you want to, then; but they are nothing but sketches, you know. And be sure you bring them back, for they are my *dernier resort*, remember."

But when Joan appeared the next day, she was jubilant. "I'm so proud of my bump of appreciation that I am going to turn art critic on the spot," she announced, with a bubbling

pleasure that was extremely contagious. "I showed them to the man I told you of, and he raved, Betty,—actually raved and tore his hair. You dear old lambkin, your fortune is made, and I believe I am destined to be the mouse who gnaws away your bonds—this useless me, think of it! He wanted to see you right away; and after I described you, he wanted to see you right 'awayer.' And I am going to bring him up this afternoon for tea and talk, biscuits and business."

"But, Joan," gasped Elizabeth, laughing helplessly at this tirade, "who is *he*, and why is it all so important?"

"Oh, bless me! I thought I told you yesterday; well, he—" with a sort of deliberate, familiar scorn—"he is n't much—that is, as a man, you know. But as a power, my dear, he is—immense! He is Bertram Linton, son of the senior member of the Boston publishing house of Linton, West, & Co.; and as he has spent his life cultivating his æsthetic tastes for art and literature, and catering to the hot-

house productions, his word, when he chooses to put his finger in the publishing pi, is law to the firm. He is far too lazy to be art editor, which he ought to be ; but when he deigns to advise and enlighten the real art editor, it is whispered that the real art editor is flattered and acquiescent to the last degree."

So it happened that the blasé Bertram Linton had come to the studio that same afternoon, still under the influence of the previous night's enthusiasm ; had imbibed several cups of Russian tea ; nibbled wafers to a most intimate amount ; put his hands in his mental pockets and jingled the social small change there ; looked quizzically at the posters, and silently at the Brittany portfolio ; and then—when Elizabeth was thoroughly out of patience with him and inwardly fuming over her wasted afternoon—just as he rose to go, had plunged instantly and cleanly into business, losing his drawl as if by magic.

" Those sketches I saw of yours last night were masterpieces in their way, Miss Wallace.

You have the sensitive touch which knows how to reveal without blurring or marring your impressions and appreciation of nature. Charcoal is the very medium for the talent you possess. There is no reason why that sort of thing should not be reproduced perfectly. Would it be possible for you to let us have three drawings for a short story which we have in mind for the June *Papyrus*? It is by Holworthy. You know his style, and it will, I think, lend itself to your interpretation very aptly. Let me see : I return to Boston to-night. I could send you the manuscript to-morrow. Could you let us have the drawings by the end of the month? It would be a great favor."

Elizabeth's business expression—attentive, grave, and comprehending—had fallen upon her like a mantle, and not even Joan guessed at the tumult of joy and anticipation which this unexpected offer of congenial work aroused in the ardent heart that had beaten so perfunctorily over advertisements.

“I think I may trust myself to undertake it,” she said simply ; “I shall be very glad of the opportunity.”

Two days later an *Idyll of the Queen* reached her ; and that her illustrations for it were satisfactory, is already known.



CHAPTER III

IDEALS

*" C'est le vague ou l'âme s'endort
Sous les ailes blanches d'un rêve."*

" **A**ND all these years, while you have been 'going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it,' you 've never—once—been in love? Not even in magical Italy, the very name of which is sufficient to put one in a susceptible condition? Oh, I give you up! 'If of herself she will not love, nothing can make her'—the fate of such a one is too horrible to quote; but it is what you deserve, you hard-hearted wretch!"

Joan's voice came lazily from the depths of the big divan, where she had flung herself back to rest after posing. They had been working

at Joan's home for the last few pictures, because the luxurious setting was just what Elizabeth needed for the "Wisp" heroine, who, more and more closely, with an almost uncanny development, had reflected the traits and life-trend of Joan Whetmore. It seemed, indeed, as if the author must have drawn his character straight from the life. This the girls knew to be impossible, however, for, although Joan had heard much of Calvert Dodge, who had been at Harvard with Bertram Linton, and who had since been making a modest name for himself in New York journalism, she had never chanced to meet him. So that one was forced to believe, what was really true, that a conception of a girl had existed as an ideal in the man's mind,—an ideal which, surely more perfectly than usually happens in this prosaic world of ours, was capable of being realized in the flesh.

The two friends had been discussing the *dénouement* of the story, a piece of lovable Quixoticism and self-abnegation on the "Wisp's"

part, of which Elizabeth had declared, truthfully, Joan would be quite capable—Joan, whose naïvely socialistic philosophy was, as yet, so little tarnished by the gay life she led and the ennuied cynicism of her world; who was persuaded that the best way to even things up was for a rich girl to bestow, if possible, her heart and worldly goods upon a poor man, and *vice versa*; and to whom this doubling of fortunes seemed a thing to be rather sighed over whenever she heard of it among the people she knew. The discussion of the book had led to a discussion of a more personal nature, which had revealed apparent saharas of soul in the case of both.

Elizabeth touched her paper caressingly with her kneaded rubber, which she had rolled to a plially sympathetic point. (Joan insisted that Elizabeth drew with her rubber more than her charcoal.) Then she moved back a step or two, and said, blushing a little, and with eyes fixed upon her picture, for even the slight self-revelation was difficult:

"Oh, Joan, I 'm not hard-hearted. You don't know me ! Italy waked longings in me, cravings which no mortal man could ever satisfy."

"I know," nodded Joan, understandingly, from her corner ; "let me see if I can express it. It is all *in* you—the power of loving, I mean, Elizabeth—though you will persist in showing your haughty I-can-get-along-perfectly-well-without-you side to the world. Your heart is there safe enough, and warmer than hundreds of others that pretend to be so soft. Only it 's wrapt around and around with fold upon fold of reserve and pride, which its very tenderness needs as protection. Some day, some man will have the patience and the tact and the strength and the gentleness to unwrap it, and to the victor will belong the spoils. Hush ! Have n't I seen you, time and time again, 'droop like a bird, like a flower hang furl'd' when people were stupid enough not to understand you ; or sparkle out like my own, brilliant star when they did ? Now I—I am so different.

All that is n't in me at all. I show a light and flippantly responsive, some say"—with a note of scorn—"a lovable side, to the world ; but all the time, in my heart I know that something within me would say, 'so far, no further' no matter who should apply. I am a *frog*, Elizabeth ; and that being the case, I wish I were old and ugly and poor, so people would n't be foolish."

"Ah, that's the trouble—" began Elizabeth warmly. But Joan had not finished yet.

"Sometimes I feel as if I had been born without the power for loving, and that frightens me. I should hate myself so"—she crossed over and slipped an arm about her friend's waist, rubbing her cheek softly on Elizabeth's shoulder. "Not this sort of loving, dear old thing, but the love that ought to be the greatest thing in the world, the only love that could make endurable a married intimacy, and the one thing that could make of such a life a beautiful one. I'll never, never, never marry without it, and so—I'll live and die an old maid, for I'm sure I'll never feel it."

“Nonsense, Joan, every girl under the sun, blessed, or cursed, with any degree of critical introspection, or any smallest speck of ideal about such things, thinks that. Of course you can't imagine it. I think if it comes, it must be a something totally, entirely new,—an unsuspected flood of feeling, of which no one can form any conception beforehand ; a security of trust which opens a new life.”

The hazel eyes had grown dark and tender, as Elizabeth spoke. Such an outburst was very unusual from this tall, self-contained girl, who spent her feelings in richest largess of deeds upon her friends, but said little. Joan watched her with a kindling face. This glimpse of a hidden side of the friend who was so dear to her, seemed to give her a sudden flash of enlightenment.

“There it is,” she said, decidedly ; “I realize these things with my mind, and you realize them with your heart.—Is it all that, Elizabeth ?” she ended, with an inflection in her voice that the other girl did not quite understand.

Elizabeth laughed and broke the spell that had come over her, with her old, teasing, everyday manner. "Well, what's the trouble with the new man?" she asked, quizzically; "there always is a new one, you know, Joan. Is he too romantic for your practical self, like the one who stole your slipper from his cousin, and kept it filled with flowers all the year round?" A hand was here clapped over her mouth, but she took possession of it and went on: "Or too ambitious, like the one who brought coals to Newcastle, and thought a lavish expenditure in Thorley's and Huyler's and opera tickets a good investment?"

"Oh, don't!" besought Joan, in shamed disclaimer; "I hate to be reminded of that one. And I wish I were a beggar in the streets, rather than a rich girl, when I remember I am open to that sort of indignity."

"Don't be so sensitive about your shekels, Joan. That is what I started to say a little while ago. I firmly believe that is just what is making you so suspicious, and ultra-analyti-

cal, and unresponsive, for it's not a bit natural for you to be so. The world is made up of all sorts and conditions of men. Thank Heaven that you have been gifted with discrimination enough to distinguish the counterfeit article, and let such an experience only make you gladder of the true thing when it comes."

"If it comes!" murmured Joan, mutinously, and Elizabeth continued, provokingly: "But to go on—does he love you too much or too little? Is he too conscious of his ugliness to be dignified, or of his good looks to be manly? Have I named them all? What is the trouble with the new one?"

"Oh, don't be absurd, Betty!" cried Joan, gayly, for her mood had changed, too, while the other had raked up the leaves of several dead pasts into very recognizable, characteristic, little heaps. "There is n't any new one. If you were only a man, lambkin, how simple it would be. We do agree so perfectly."

"Yes, when we are together, we do, Joan," said Elizabeth, gravely. "Do you know, you

wise little girl, you make life so much less complicated to me. You bring out such a nice, sensible, practical side of me always. The day I first saw you, when you came to Farmington with Mrs. Whetmore, I had been having a tantrum all to myself, and the minute I laid my eyes on you, I said to myself that I had been a morbid goose. That is the way to take life—with an accepted faith, and firm, inflexible principles, that keep one's forehead like a baby's, at the advanced age of twenty-three—instead of taking it in the vacillating, I've-got-to-solve-this-all-by-myself fashion, that imprints deep furrows like this"—and she rubbed her finger ruefully up and down between her straight eyebrows. "Who would ever think we were the same age, Joan?"

Joan laughed. "Goosey! And do you remember what you said to me a few days later? I recall it so well. You said, 'I knew you were good, right away, Miss Whetmore,' and when I asked you how you told, you answered, 'By your umbrella.' And do you know, I've

puzzled over that ever since. *Won't* you explain it?"

Elizabeth shook her head, laughing, too. "Don't try to worm a meaning into all my foolish remarks," she said. "I must be going this minute. It's getting late, and Mother will think I've fallen into the reservoir, or been sand-bagged in the subway."

"You do need me," said Joan, complacently, and counting off the ways on her fingers as they went down stairs together. "You need me to wean you from a wee leaning toward the Bohemian in society, and from the radical in politics, and from an unorthodox inclination in religion. You need me to laugh at, and scold you, and to understand you, until a man comes along who will have so much faith in God, in himself, and in you, that you will be ashamed to be less than your real self in the face of his appreciation of you—faults as well as virtues."

They had reached the front door, and Elizabeth paused, with her hand on the knob.

“Joan, what makes you such a wise little body this afternoon?” she asked, curiously.

Joan shrugged her small shoulders in a non-committal fashion. Then she smiled very sweetly. “I can at least appreciate you, Beth. I don’t know how I ever came to do it, but I believe I know you better than you do yourself. Let me give you one last thought which you can put into your mental pipe and smoke all the way home. To go back to our old discussion. Yes, I would be capable of just such a sacrifice as the Wisp made. I will give myself that much credit. But this, this is the difference between you and me, and between you and the Wisp. Don’t you see, with her, it was the *will* of the Wisp—didn’t that thought strike you? With me, it would be the same. I should give up everything for my love’s sake, as she did, but I should do it after coolly counting the cost, fully realizing what I was leaving behind. In other words, it would be a distinct, conscious effort of *will*. While you, Elizabeth, would give it up without even know-

ing that you had renounced anything. To you, it would be absolutely no sacrifice at all."

"And is n't your way far greater?" responded Elizabeth, promptly and loyally; "you would be doing far more if you realized the sacrifice. Unless one feels a sacrifice, there is no nobility at all in it, don't you see?"

But Joan shook her head in an unconvinced little way. And as Elizabeth walked home across the Park, lingering idly over their conversation, the sunset glamour, always painfully beautiful, to-night brought back Italy in an ardent flood of tender memories, which seemed to illuminate some hidden corner of her heart. She realized, vaguely, that Joan was right; that deep down in her nature, lay dreaming the unawakened south, and a capacity for a whole-souled self-surrender, of which Joan, tender, and true, and loving as she was, was utterly incapable. And Elizabeth, to whom this friend of hers was the embodiment of all that was perfect maidenliness and truest womanliness, in spite of her gilded, conventional

environment, hated herself for the knowledge,
and hastened to bury the sudden conviction
deep down in the most obscure and unused
portion of her brain.



CHAPTER IV

RECONNOITERING

“ Do I chase the substance or the shadow ? Will it hold ? ”

THE weather had been merciful through April and May, wonderfully so. When the fifteenth of May had been passed without one unbearably warm day, people whose fate ordained that they should spend the greater part of their summer on city stones, began to congratulate themselves, in a subdued way, and to prophesy an unusually cool season—but under their breath, for fear of taking the weather too much for granted ; in which case, fickle dame that she is, the contrariety of her nature might manifest itself and prove all their boasting confidence worse than vain.

Sure enough, something had overtaxed her graciousness at last, and she asserted herself in a breathlessly close and trying mood, at the end of May ; a mood which sent flying, panic-stricken from the city, those who had lingered lazily on in their luxurious winter quarters, putting off the hegira to various summer resorts, where the creature discomforts of insufficient room were apt to obtrude upon the delights of sea breezes and mountain scenery and fashionable intercourse.

One hot afternoon, at the end of May, Bertram Linton, who was apt to develop an unsuspected energy just at the time when other people felt particularly limp, strolled into the *Times* Building, looking maddeningly cool in a costume more suited to the deck of a yacht than a newspaper office.

He found Calvert Dodge writing at his desk, like one possessed, a deep frown between the dark gray eyes, and an expression upon his firm mouth which seemed to say, " I 'll do this if I die, weather or no ! " He threw down his

pen, however, and shook his friend's hand with an unbusinesslike heartiness, as he eyed Bertram with an amused gleam in his eye. Linton invariably probed his more genial side, and made him long to be back in the "yard" again, lying on his back in the shade, with a pipe, and something cool in a jug at his elbow.

"When did you run down, old man?" he asked, in a pleased voice.

"Run! this weather! Preserve us, Dodge!" drawled the other. "He who runs may reel, these days. I sailed down in the *Interloper*—Tom Burns's boat, you know. She is anchored in the Sound till to-morrow night, and after that bound for Nova Scotia. Greatest lot of duffers on board,—the men all done up by this heat, and cross to get along up north, and the women rabid about some shopping which must be done in New York before they start. Why on earth they put on so much style for the wilds, passes me. They won't see a soul who will know whether they are up-to-date or not."

"Possibly, because they are taking along a piece of civilization with them," suggested Calvert, cannily.

"By Jove, I never thought of that—Madge Oliver and Tom Burns, of course; Mrs. Brinton and Gaston! But that Talcott girl, I wonder who—"

"How about Bertram Linton?" insinuated Dodge, drily.

"Nonsense!" disclaimed Linton, vigorously, but with a reminiscent chuckle; "she did haul me in this morning, at her chariot wheels, however. Said sweet things to me all the way, too; hinted that I was the only man of the party; the rest were all selfish brutes; and wanted me to go match ribbons with her. I broke away, though, and said there was a date I had to meet, down-town. Sounded well, you know. She thought I'd become *homme d'affaires* at once, and began to talk aim in life, and that sort of thing. Girls all do that with me, sooner or later. Great Scott! If they only knew how it amuses men and bores them

to hear the changes rung, soprano and contralto, on the same everlasting text !”

Calvert's droll expression twitched at the corners of his mouth. “ You 'll talk that way, till The Girl comes along, Bertie. Then her arguments will be the most wonderfully inspired law and gospel. You 'll wonder how you ever looked at life in such a beastly, selfish, inactive way, and you 'll set down every man who has no ‘aim in life’ as an unenlightened clod.”

To his surprise, Linton did not combat these random shots. Instead, he leaned across the desk, and said with a gravity that was totally new with him, “ Hang it all, old man ! Once in a while, I feel as if something had forced me into a false position. Things have come too much my way, I believe.”

“ Stuff and nonsense, Bertie ! If you 'd had to work for them as I have, you 'd be the same driving slave, with not a pleasure in life, except a cargo of dreams that could never come true.”

“ If I ’d had to work for them, I believe I ’d be a happier human to-day ; and perhaps others might too. Who’s the better for my having lived, I ’d like to know ? ”

“ You great, stupid, generous donkey, their name is legion. ”

“ Oh, that ! ” contemptuously. “ Where’s the credit of throwing away money ? It’s easier to do it than not to do it. It is n’t as if I had to stint myself to do it. What I mean is, I have never done a lick of brain work, or heart work, or body work for a living creature. I call that a pretty poor record. Shut up ! I want to finish. Sometimes, Calvert, I feel like a—a—saturate solution of something. But what it is, I can’t for the life of me tell. I know that there are unsuspected possibilities in me, and that perhaps a single drop of some concentrated, outside influence would set it all free, and precipitate visibly whatever of good, or power for good, I possess. ”

“ Women do that for some men, ” Calvert here interpolated meaningly—such flights of

rhetoric sounded suspicious. He thought he detected a slight deepening of color on his friend's face, which was, however, bronzed to such an artistically deep, Indian red by sun and wind, that it was hard to be sure.

Bertram looked straight ahead of him. "I wonder if I shall ever meet anyone, man or woman, who will have that effect on me ; or if I am doomed to remain a helpless, heavy, saturate solution all my days, burdened with the weight of what I believe I possess, but with no means of proving the truth to myself or others. Pretty good simile, that !" he added, with the whimsical self-ridicule which was a trick of his, and a characteristic which, while it would save him from making a great fool of himself, might also be the means of shaming the better impulses of his rarely aroused enthusiasm.

"Good enough for a book," nodded Dodge, encouragingly. "Wonder if the all-powerful drop would n't precipitate literature into an already overstocked world?"

“The gods forbid!” cried Linton, in holy horror, “with all due apologies to your profession, Calvert. No fear of that! Probably that wasn’t my own thought after all. That’s always the way! Whenever a thought strikes me as having any particular merit, I generally find it’s one that has been left on my mental door-step at some time or other, and which I have taken in tenderly, and adopted, and cared for, till I have forgotten it’s not my very own. Do you happen to have met anyone in your book ramblings, to whom that idea bears enough resemblance to belong?” he inquired, with mock anxiety.

“Now that you ask me—” began Calvert, confidentially; but Linton rose to his feet peremptorily.

“Come on, Calvert,” he urged, “come out and lunch with a fellow. I sha’n’t see you again all summer, in all probability, and it’s not any too often you get the chance of grubbing with me these days, is it?”

“Well, I don’t care if I do, Linton. I wanted

to speak to you about those illustration proofs your people sent on to me the other day. I never dreamed of being in such luck. One usually wants to disown one's characters after they have been interpreted by anyone else; but these suit me down to the ground."


"Great, are n't they?" agreed Linton, somewhat absent-mindedly. "First-rate! You are in luck, and so are we to have discovered such unusual talent." Then, more enthusiastically, "The thing I like best about you, Calvert," he added, as the other shut his desk, with a quick motion, and reached for his hat, "is that you have n't any of that infernal self-importance so many chaps have who are n't half so busy. You never take the edge off a fellow's enthusiasm by that beastly, business-before-pleasure way of making a fellow wait for you."

His friend smiled. "Just because I have discovered this simple rule: 'It's usually as easy to shave the last end of a pleasure, and use it for business, as the first.' When one ten minutes is as good as another ten minutes, I

believe in making sure of the pleasure while it's keen."

"That 's another thing," appreciatively. "You can rely upon yourself not to forget the ten minutes altogether, and so get desperately in arrears, and never accomplish anything. If most people tried your rule, it would be all play and no work, I fancy."

The next absorbing objects of discussion were a bird and a salad ; after which, while the two friends trifled lazily over their coffee and cigars, Dodge reverted to the subject of illustration. To tell the truth, he had been actually startled when he received the proofs of Miss Wallace's sketches, at the exact, almost incomprehensible, portrayal of the mental vision which had been wholly a creation of his fancy. His delight at the intuitive correspondence which this charcoal Wisp bore to his pen-and-ink heroine, delighted as well as puzzled him. He knew enough about art to feel, moreover, that the work was not *chicqued* in any particular ; and the fact, thus made ap-



parent to him, that there must exist, somewhere, a girl who answered so completely to the character which had grown real and dear to him in the process of evolution, piqued his curiosity, and interest, to a very unusual pitch. A coincidence of this sort, from its very nature, which partook slightly of the inexplicable, was one that could not help but appeal to a man whose cargo of dreams were, as he himself had acknowledged, his chief, and almost his only, pleasure in life. It was characteristic that this should be so ; and it was also characteristic that he should, involuntarily, intensify the pleasure by keeping it entirely to himself, since, as he was well aware, " dreams exposed to the air sometimes fade ! "

It was with a well-assumed expression, in which was visible nothing but the very natural pleasure which an author whose ideas had been appreciated might be supposed to feel, that he put the momentous first question which was, eventually (so he proposed), to lead him to the flesh-and-blood Wisp.

“Who is this E. Wallace?” he asked, casually. “He seems, as you say, to possess unusual talent.”

Bertram Linton leaned back, and an inscrutable expression came into his eyes. He flicked the ashes from his cigar before he answered. “A new light altogether,” he said finally, “which I was led to discover early in the spring. I was fascinated by the work at once, and got the artist to illustrate a short magazine story for the June *Papyrus*. You may remember it—‘An Idyll of the Queen.’ The illustrations were seized upon and well reviewed everywhere.”

“Of course I remember it,” cried Calvert, eagerly. “Curious that I had n’t connected the style at once, for those drawings appealed to me in such a strangely personal way. I felt as if they held a message for me, just as one feels in some moods with nature itself. That was what they were, they were nature itself,” he ended, enthusiastically. “By Jove! No wonder I liked the others. Is he a Boston man?”

"The artist is a New Yorker," drawled Linton, tipping his chair to a more comfortable angle.

"Is that so? I am no end glad of that. See here, Bertie, I want very much to talk over the last two drawings, which they say are not finished yet. I have one pet scene in my mind which I think it might not occur to him to illustrate. It is something I like specially, although what most people might think trivial, and I have a fancy to have it brought out in the way he would be sure to do it. He has a studio, I suppose?" Linton nodded. "Could n't you take me there this afternoon?" His voice was really very urgent; and Linton brought his chair down to the ground with a sharp tap.

"Come on, then," he said briefly, "it's after three now. I've got to be back at the yacht by six."



CHAPTER V

A FALSE START

" He came unlooked for, undesired."

Dearth of some factor prime, the poet sings,
Time, place, or friendly soul withheld alway ;
Thus, no perfection as on earth we stray.
Hard this may be, but harder I reply—
Granted occasion and congenial minds—
The stubborn, vexing spite of little things !

THE two men boarded a Broadway cable ;
and, half an hour later, they were standing outside Studio No. 18, on the top floor of the Velasquez building. Upon the oaken door was a sign, bearing the name " E. Wallace " in plain black letters.

Bertram Linton knocked, and a minute later a light step sounded within. Then the door was flung open, and Calvert heard a low voice saying evenly : " How do you do, Mr.

Linton?" after which he became vaguely aware that his name was being mentioned in connection with that of a tall, rather unfriendly looking girl, to whom he bowed in a somewhat dazed manner, and with a lack of spontaneous acknowledgment, of which he was painfully conscious.

It was several moments before he made out, definitely, his mistake, and the wilful way in which Bertie had kept him in ignorance of it. Since Linton was taking the situation with an easy nonchalance which would have made an explanation preposterous, there was nothing for him to do but to brace up, and make the best of his awkward entrance and his discomfited manner, which it irritated him to feel must have appeared boorish in the extreme.

What had he said, anyhow? Bertram had introduced him, in a light and airy way, as the man who was responsible for the *Will of the Wisp*; and she—she had uttered some courteous expression of pleasure, and polite appreciation of his book, which he had received with

absolute, idiotic vacancy, and lack of response. But this was worse than ever ! He must wait until he got out of the studio before trying to recall it all. He pulled himself together, and observed that the other two were talking lightly, after the usual fashion of people who know each other in a pleasantly superficial way, and with a rather marked avoidance of him, which he felt to be utterly mistaken kindness.

"I am so glad to have this pleasure, Miss Wallace," Dodge said, opening his mouth for the first time, and voicing this extremely commonplace remark in a tone which could scarcely fail to sound unusually distinct and mechanical, after his previous silence. Miss Wallace turned towards him, her large, hazel eyes, which looked a clear amber at the moment, scrutinizing him with a frankly puzzled, and yet indifferent air, which piqued him unaccountably. He felt a strong desire to say or do something original ; but one is shackled horribly by the conventionalities at times, and this was one of them. It seemed to Dodge that

he was hopelessly caged in the commonplace. His next remark proved it.

“Your work delighted me so. It so exactly expressed my own ideas.” Worse and worse ! Could anything be more hopelessly egotistical than to allow his praise of her work to rest on the fact that it had appreciated his ? The man felt a disproportionate rage growing within him, and was conscious that a heat, which was not fully accounted for by the weather, showed itself upon his countenance. He had an insane desire to fling angry words at Bertie, and see how this calm young woman would look, and what she would say then. But just at that moment Bertie did something more audacious than anything he had done yet. “Well, I must be off,” he observed, genially. “I am due at the yacht by six, and have something to attend to first. Besides, I know you two people are anxious to talk over the book and drawings ; and I think that it is a matter for you to settle together, before I, in my official capacity of proxy publisher, have anything to say. Good-

bye, Miss Wallace. Shall I see you at the Berkshires next month ?”

“No,” answered Miss Wallace, smilingly. “I shall have to give up the Berkshires this summer. It would be superfluous to wish you a delightful time, for you are sure to have it with the Everetts.”

“I am awfully sorry. I hoped so much that you would conclude to go. Then it is good-bye for some time, I am afraid, for I sha’n’t be in town again till July, and then you will be away, will you not ?”

“I don’t know at all, Mr. Linton, but I think we shall stay in town as long as it is endurable. I have a good deal of work on hand,” the girl ended, with a proud little lifting of her chin, which bespoke self-reliance in every line.

“Ah, then I shall look forward to seeing you then !” cried Linton, in a pleased voice, which Calvert noted irritably. Why did n’t the beggar go, if he was going, and end the social situation ! He felt, now that he had been

forced into a *tête-à-tête* with this unattractive girl, he would make it purely a business one, and be over with it as soon as possible. Of all cowardly tricks, this was the most cowardly—to play a practical joke, and then run away, instead of seeing it out and taking a man's revenge like a gentleman!

Linton turned cheerfully to Dodge, and held out a friendly hand. "Good-bye, Calvert," he said, cordially. "Don't work too hard, old man—and do try and keep cool this summer," he added, feathering his last shaft in the tone of a parting benediction.

The door closed after him, and author and illustrator were finally left alone. Elizabeth was irritated too, in the same unaccountable way. She had read this man's book with a genuine enjoyment, taking a strangely familiar pleasure in its quaint touches of humor, and the delicate fancy that flashed with the illusive glamour of a summer aurora across its pages. Instinctively, she had felt drawn towards the author without having seen him ;

and she had had, too, a distinct desire to meet a man who could write so appreciatively about a character which she had long loved and passionately admired in her dearest friend. She had unconsciously imagined that he would be one who would show this delicacy of sentiment, and capacity for sympathetic character-delineation, in his bearing. But this man—this tall, awkward, hostile-looking creature, who had praised her work in such a self-satisfied way—how could she ever have been misled into connecting him, in any way, with her dainty, refined, peerless little Joan ?

Now as she closed the door, and turned towards her unwelcome visitor, there was in her face a little wearied expression which smote something deeper than Calvert's mind with a sense of injustice ; and a quick wish to tell her of his mistake, and set himself straight in those bored eyes, rose within him. But he stifled it as too undignified, picturing to himself what a raw, school-boyish ring the whole story would have. Elizabeth broke what threatened

to be an awkward pause with a business-like ease, which was at once a relief and a renewed irritation to the man who had just determined that their interview should be confined to that very key.

“You wish to speak to me about the illustrations?” she said questioningly, reaching toward a little bookcase, and taking from its top shelf a bulky envelope which contained proof-sheets. “Was there something you wished to suggest in those I have already done,—some alteration? Or was it something about the two I have not yet begun?”

“Nothing, nothing in the least—” protested Calvert, miserably. What hatefully insufferable finikyness she must have credited him with! How absurdly inadequate the suggestion he had intended to make would seem to her now, when she would probably view it only as a presuming lack of confidence in her own judgment, which had been so admirably displayed in the case of what she had already done.

Elizabeth raised her dark eyebrows. "I thought—" she began, while a wonder crept into her mind as to the identity of this curious individual, who did not appear to have mind enough to carry on an intelligent conversation, much less conceive of a book like *The Will of the Wisp*.

The situation was really growing desperate. Calvert, figuratively, shut his eyes, and plunged into deep water, expecting to butt his head on a rock at first venture. To his surprise, however, he found himself striking out masterfully; and upborne on delightfully, buoyantly refreshing waves of self-respect. "Why, it was just this," he began quickly; "I came up from Cuba last week to find the proofs of the illustrations which you have made so far waiting for me. Before I went, the question of illustration had not been settled, and I cannot tell you what delight the pictures gave me. I assure you, Miss Wallace, it seemed to me perfectly extraordinary, the way in which you have gone beyond me in fulfilling, and more

than completing, my fragmentary attempt to portray scenes and characters. I can't tell you how greatly I admire your work,—its force, and simplicity, and grace of suggestion. Most of all was I pleased with the points that you have chosen to bring out. For by your choice, it seems to me that you have strengthened and illumined the text in such a wonderful way. And then, on thinking this over, it suddenly occurred to me that there was one situation in the very last of the book. Not the culminating one,—a situation, indeed, which scarcely anyone would think important, but in which I had hidden a thought that, if brought out by your art, would quicken the life of the whole book. I was very much of a doubting Thomas to fear, after what you have done, that your judgment would not be, perhaps, even wiser than mine for the last picture ; but you must try to forgive it as the inevitably doting affection a man has for certain thoughts, which he believes peculiarly his own. I thought I should like at least to tell

you how I enjoyed what you have done ; and how grateful I am for the sympathetic co-operation you have so generously given me in the very simple little story."

Bravo ! He had done well. It was somewhat flowery, perhaps ; but he really meant the appreciation of her work, and that must at least ring true. He stopped, and waited anxiously for Miss Wallace to speak. From the moment that he had entered the room, in his embarrassment, he had completely forgotten his prime object in seeking out the artist who had interpreted his ideal so cleverly.

Now it came back with a rush. Could it have been because, while he had been speaking, the same thought had come so strongly into Elizabeth Wallace's mind ? As soon as he had mentioned her interpretation of his characters, the explanation had flashed into her head of all this oddness. That was it, how stupid ! Of course that explained the whole thing,—visit, embarrassment, and all. Why had it never entered her head that the substantiation

of his conception of the Wisp would, in turn, re-act upon the man who wrote the book, and take hold of his imagination with the same uncanny strangeness? Of course he would not fancy for a moment, that the choice of a model had been anything but accidental, which would make the coincidence appear even more extraordinary. Of course he felt embarrassed in speaking of this. Poor man! Though she could not do anything but pity him, she did certainly do that—"the moth and the star!"—Poor man! She would be kind to him, nice to him, and interested of course. She did not even hear his complimentary remarks, so engrossed was she in fitting this brilliant fancy of hers into the situation.

With no slightest clue to this train of thought passing so swiftly through the girl's head, it was small wonder that her manner, when she spoke, was a surprise to Calvert Dodge. There was a distinct note of friendliness in her voice; and into the hazel eyes there had come a something more human,

which seemed to recognize his claim to be considered in other light than that of an unwelcome, ungainly necessity, who had to be interviewed, however distasteful the interview might be.

“I am so very glad to talk the pictures over with you,” she said brightly. “I have often wanted to do so. This one, in the old mill, now. They have sent me back my originals, you see—was n’t it good of them?” She drew out of a portfolio, as she spoke, one of the first illustrations she had made,—a young girl, kneeling on the floor of an old, weather-beaten mill-room, through which just one bar of sunlight crept, bringing out the listening attitude of her head, and the happiness of her face, hidden from view of one below, and therefore free to express its gladness at a voice which came to her between the rushing of the water, invisible beneath. “I hesitated so long about this one,” said Elizabeth. “I did n’t know whether to take this minute, when he surprises her, up in the old mill, or the one a little later—

when they are together, after he has helped her down. But I thought this was better, before they had met, when she gloried in the darkness, and the fact that she could show her pleasure unseen."

As she spoke, there was a lilting, sympathetic joy in Elizabeth's voice—which had that rare quality of reflecting an emotion described—and Calvert answered enthusiastically, "That was the only point to choose, Miss Wallace. And how much more beautiful your original is than the proof. What a shame that the pictures have to be reduced so greatly! This makes me long for an *édition de luxe*. The illustrations certainly deserve it; and you have barely suggested a color-scheme in this one that is delicious—just enough to intensify the mellow, plummy gloom of the old building, and the contrasting radiance of sunlight. That face is exquisite! I cannot imagine a face that would more perfectly typify the idea which I had in mind for the Wisp. It is extraordinary!"

He was studying it with an intentness of interest and eager scrutiny, which seemed to find each detail complete; and Elizabeth watched him in turn, with a growing curiosity. Her sense of form and shape, and her knowledge of what every portion of the human frame should be, made her keenly alive to its harmonies or discords, its successes and its failures. She decided now in an impartial way, that one must call this man before her a success, as a whole; although a certain squareness and eccentric bumpiness of outline made his head more of a fugue than a continuous melody, or a single harmonious chord. It was interesting, though, especially about the high temples, where there was suggested a sensitive thoughtfulness that affected her as pure pathos; although the next quick glance at his mouth aroused a spirit of obstinacy in her at once. A man with a mouth like that would be too dictatorial, too masterful. But he was interesting; decidedly interesting as a type—yes, and possibly, as a man. What was the thought

that made the vein in his temple throb so, she wondered. He must have put his soul into that character of the Wisp to be so moved, at first, out of the self-possession which seemed now his natural manner. For the sake of that brow and the friendliness she already felt for it, she would satisfy his unspoken query about the picture.

"Is n't it good?" she smiled, responsively. "I thought you would think so! The girl who posed for that is a friend of mine,—my best friend. Do you know," with a quick impulse of truthfulness, as his eyes were turned with a frank interest to hers, "it is the most curious thing; but you have described her, without knowing her, more perfectly than I could do to-day—I, who have known her always. You have put into adequate words all that I have felt, vaguely, about her, this long time—have crystallized the charm she has always had for me, in that book of yours."

"Who is she?" Calvert asked quickly. He had divined at once, that this strange girl had

fathomed his motive; and without actually formulating the thought, he felt that he would never dream of trying to disguise it from her. Moreover, that he did not mind her knowing in the slightest—as, for instance, he would have shrunk from letting Linton guess at his fanciful dream. This strange sharing of it with the one who had made the realization of it possible did not tarnish it in the least. Rather, her understanding of the curious coincidence made it all the more fascinating.

“Her name is Joan Whetmore,” answered Elizabeth, smiling a little, “and she is a New York girl. She has been so dear about the posing and has helped me so much. You must meet her some day. It would be interesting, would it not?”

Their eyes met, and they both laughed a little, with a curious sensation of a fellowship that needed no words. “What part was it you spoke of for the last illustration? Was it this, I wonder?” and turning the pages over quickly, she picked out one, and laid her finger against

the sentence. Their eyes met again. "You are a witch!" he cried, with an involuntary wonder, which held, however, no tinge of undue familiarity. "How did you know?"

"'By the pricking in my thumbs,' I suppose," the girl laughed, lightly. "Oh, it was nothing. Anyone who reads the book comprehendingly must be struck with the bearing which that little trivial moment had on all that went before, all that came after. It was the unguessed turning-point; and it was so much more artistic to treat it in the quiet manner you did, instead of calling attention to a thing which I suppose even she never realized to her dying day."

He noticed her words. Taking the people for granted, carrying them on, in imagination, far beyond the covers of the book. That was the way he always felt about characters he really loved in books. Others might be clever, interesting, amusing, but one shut them in when one shut the book. They never lived on about one as friends, as sentient, alive crea-

tures. "That 's just as I felt about it," he said slowly. "I am glad you understood. If I could hope for only a few such sympathetic readers, the little book might not be launched for nothing."

"It will not be launched for nothing. There is truth in it; and thought, simply and yet powerfully expressed. That is never given to the world in vain." Elizabeth spoke quickly, and with a throb of generous encouragement in her heart and voice.

Calvert, more touched than he really understood, turned toward the picture again; and Elizabeth felt instantly and vividly the wide gulf between herself and the girl who was the ideal of his brain. A realization which brought with it the quick sensation of self-dissatisfaction, self-hatred, which had so strongly assailed her in the park, the other day, on comparing herself with Joan.

When Calvert turned again, the old, indifferent expression had come back to her eyes, and her chin was lifted in the hostile way it

had when Elizabeth was conscious of any shortcoming or weakness in herself, and intrenched herself behind the impenetrable barrier of reserve which sometimes made people misjudge her so cruelly. The man felt the difference ; and after asking and receiving permission to call again, he said good-afternoon, and left the studio promptly, his mind in a sort of whirl, in the centre of which he thought he could distinguish only one desire clearly—the desire to meet and know the girl who had posed for the central, Ariel-like figure of his book.



CHAPTER VI

IN LIGHTEST LENOX

“ Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door ;
I try the fresh fortune—

* * * * *

Still the same chance ! she goes out as I enter.”

TEN days later Calvert received the proof of his last picture. In some respects, it was the best of all ; and he could not help congratulating himself upon the moment they had chosen to portray. As he had said, it threw a vivid ray of light upon the whole book. In it the Wisp was more attractive than ever, with a wistful questioning in her face that appealed strongly to the man who felt such an odd sense of possession as he looked into the pictured eyes.

Elizabeth Wallace had been partly right, partly wrong, as was usually the case. Calvert had not consciously introduced a personal ideal into his book ; but irritated with the cynical society twaddle which claimed to be considered the truth and nothing but the truth, he had made up his mind to prove, if he could, that this need not be the whole truth ; and to draw, as conscientiously as possible, the gradually weakening effect of a worldly environment and influence of the most pronounced kind upon an inherently true, clear-minded, pure-hearted girl, with no one to turn to for help and support in her family, among her friends, or in the world in which she shone by virtue of her quick-witted tact and love of fun, when the one man who understood her came into her life. A man with nothing to recommend him but his love—neither talent, nor brilliant business ability, nor wealth—absolutely nothing but his love and goodness and infinite comprehension of her worth and higher needs.

Although his minor characters had been drawn with a masterly hand by one who had had ample opportunity to judge of the hollowness and sham of those who seek first the flesh-pots, and their own superficial gratification, there had been a lack of that caustic, personal bitterness, which always suggests either a shut-out spite, or a clever snobbishness in so many books which deal with such topics. These had been treated merely as a background for that one natural, lovable figure,—the girl who appreciated the flesh-pots and social refinements from instinct and training, and yet abdicated them, at the last, for a love the value of which was apparent to no one who had previously influenced her life.

That he had never known such a girl was true, for he had known few women intimately ; and, as a rule, he had preferred to study those whom he met, quietly, from the middle distance, where one can judge with greater clearness of vision and discrimination, than when so close as to be misled by the personal equation.

Once in a while, eyes that he saw in the crush of some crowded ballroom, or in the luxurious depths of an opera-box, had appealed to this chivalrous, intuitive side of his nature very strongly. Eyes whose habitual expression was relaxed, and which seemed to be, in an absent moment, seeking for comprehension and help in the real life for which they longed, but which they could not lead in this atmosphere to which they had been born ; eyes which had the look of watching unconsciously for someone who could persuade them to give it all up for a hardier, open-air life, in a world beyond their exclusive, little, hothouse world. Before this instinct could actually be formulated, the moment had passed, the expression was fled ; and he had metaphorically rubbed his eyes, and wondered if he had not been a romantic idiot in the case under consideration. But the impression remained, nevertheless. His heart became gradually full of pity for this class of women, which he was sure existed ; and he often wondered hotly, what fatal superstition

held them bound as cruelly as the effete and more material superstitions which bound the women of the past, and which have been ruptured, one by one, as the years have gone by. What is this mysterious Moloch of arbitrary custom? Whence its deadly power? The courage of one's convictions in great things is easy, alas! It is the small, petty nothings of every day, the thousand and one superficial little laws which custom has laid down for us, that we cannot make up our minds to override. Our feet are tangled hopelessly in the fine mesh of social red-tape which has been woven, hour by hour, and minute by minute, about us from the cradle,—a mesh of trifles light as air, but so strong a cable that originality, individuality, is often hopelessly confined by it, and growth irrevocably stunted.

This last illustration added tenfold to Calvert's impatience to meet the original, and discover if his feeling of ownership would be increased or diminished. The same afternoon, in obedience to this boyish impulse, and an

unconfessed desire to see if Miss Wallace would prove as unusually intuitive on further acquaintance, he called at Fifty-fifth Street.

He found Elizabeth deep in the mysteries of a cover design, destined to adorn a summer number of some small, unfamous magazine, an arrangement in soft greens and browns, which suggested the cool boskiness of the woods in a tempting way. She was clad in a long, unbleached linen apron, which reached from her head to her heels in a sort of smocked effect, which gave her a very youthful appearance. It was decorated, with a careless indifference, in dabs and splashes from her eager paint-brushes which could never learn to behave themselves properly, and remember to wipe themselves on the clean cloths intended for them, which Mrs. Wallace supplied, faithfully and periodically, for that purpose.

She greeted him with an abstracted dignity, which seemed quite unconscious of the smocked shroud and its variegated stains. "I must finish this to be packed at four," she said, in

explanation of the huge palette on her left arm. "There is only a little more to do. Will you excuse me if I go on with it while we talk? No! Not *that* chair! That is decrepit! But the couch is comfortable—if you take it gradually! There is a trifle wrong with the spring, but it is very comfortable when you are really settled."

Calvert risked the couch, and managed to settle himself with the aid of two pillows which he disposed in the clumsy, inefficient way men have with pillows when they are trying to make themselves comfortable in polite society. While he did so, Elizabeth had returned to her easel at which she worked standing. She moved back a few paces, and regarded it with a long glance from screwed-up eyes whose dreamingly critical expression made Calvert feel as if she had forgotten his existence altogether; and he coughed slightly to assure himself that he was really awake, and being ignored in this cursory way.

At the sound Elizabeth spoke, without,

however, removing her considering eyes from the canvas. "How was the last picture?" she asked. "Did it please you? Have you seen it?"

"Of course it pleased me. You must fancy me hard to satisfy if you ask that! It's better than all the rest," said Calvert, a bit testily. The fact that he wanted to ask about Miss Whetmore, added to the fact that he did not see his way to the doing of it easily, made him impatient. He felt sure that Miss Wallace's far-away, judicial eyes would look very much surprised, in a coldly polite manner, should he state his wish abruptly; and yet he had a vivid desire to see them turned upon him with some degree of personal recognition, even if it were an intolerant one. With this impulse he had just reached the point where he had determined to voice his request, when the eyes were turned his way, with a momentary expression of humorous appreciation and camaraderie that made them very attractive. "You want to meet Miss Whetmore, do you not?" she said.

Calvert laughed boyishly. "I do ; I am wildly curious. I admit it frankly. What is the use of pretending ?"

"None. But I am very sorry ! It's impossible yet awhile. She went away this morning."

Dodge sat up straight. The propping pillows slipped down, and he clutched for them awkwardly. "Gone !" he echoed.

"Yes. They left to-day for the Berkshires. It's too bad. I had hoped to ask you to tea together, some afternoon before she left ; but she was so busy these last few days. Never mind ! It is only putting it off a bit." Elizabeth felt genuinely sorry for this man with the frank gray eyes, and the habitual, rumped toss of hair at the temples, that betrayed impatient thought and fingers. Was he taking it very much to heart, she wondered, with her quick sympathy for any least thing which she knew, or fancied, to be disappointed. Elizabeth secretly hated a disappointment more than anything on earth. This same inordinate imagination of hers made

things so real to her that her future became insensibly as actual as her past ; and it seemed just as much of a shock to her that her anticipation should play her false, as her memory.

"'T was ever thus !" ejaculated Dodge ; "she 's to be gone all summer, of course ?"

"Yes," said Elizabeth, feeling like Fate ; "the whole family will be in Europe all summer, and until she starts, Joan herself is to be with the Everetts."

"The Everetts who have a place at Lenox ?"

"Yes, do you know them ?"

"Only Bob,—but he and I were good friends at college, and he wrote and asked me to run up any time this summer, only a week ago. I have n't answered the letter yet, but by Jove !—" He paused, hopefully, and Elizabeth caught his meaning as he was almost sure she would.

"Of course you must go up there," she said, pleased as he at the coincidence. "How things seem to dove-tail in ! Why don't you

go right up there? It will be such a fine chance for you to grow to know each other in the best sort of an informal way."

Grow to know her! Somehow that was a new idea to Dodge, whose impulse had stopped short at the meeting point, and had never gone further, and imagined a resulting friendship. He felt that he knew her already. There could be no surprises in this girl for him. It might be very interesting though. At any rate he was curious to see her; and the instinct of the baffled to carry on the chase was keen upon him. "That's what I'll do," he said, decidedly. "Bob said there was to be a 'continuous performance of house-parties all summer long.' And that I would 'fit into the show' whenever I could get off. He writes such a characteristic letter! You know him, don't you, Miss Wallace? I thought I heard you say something about them to Linton the other day."

"Oh, yes, I know them all. They spent two winters in Italy when we were there. I

am very fond of Bob. He is a harum-scarum, is n't he? We got lost on Vesuvius once together, and I remember what a joke he made of the whole affair; and how, after burning his hand with some lava in helping me climb, he said he hoped I'd pardon his having had a 'drop of the crater!'"

They both laughed with a common relish of a personality which enriched even such a bald-faced pun.

"He is always up to his old tricks," Calvert said. "He went on to say in his note, that if I were a golfer I'd be in heaven at Lenox, as life there was 'linked sweetness long drawn out' just now!"

"I can imagine how he would revel in the costume!" added Elizabeth. "He always did love clothes! and I never knew which I'd find in the drawing-room when he was announced—a Piccadilly swell, a picturesque Italian, or a rough-and-ready Scottish sportsman."

"He always had a mine of cravats at college. The fellows found it out pretty soon

and worked the vein for all they were worth, of course ; but that is another thing about Bob, he is the most good-natured, generous soul in the world," heartily.

" Indeed he is," said Elizabeth, her eyes and voice softening tenderly ; " I shall never forget how he helped us, when father—" she paused abruptly, and added, with a brisk change of voice, " When shall you start ? "

Dodge was conscious of a slight shock. He had actually forgotten for the moment that he was going, in the brief revelation of womanliness that had affected him with the feeling one has when a cloud lifts suddenly on a mountain-top, and instead of the bare, lonely heights, a grateful glimpse of cultivated herbage, filled with the influence of human love and care, is seen. One feels, in such an instant, closer to these suddenly revealed, simple-hearted dwellers on the heights, than to the many who swarm so openly and close to us below.

" Eh ? Oh, the sooner the better, I sup-

pose! I wish you were going, too, Miss Wallace," he said, with a sudden tightening at his heart ; for a lively remembrance of the way this girl had intimated to Bertram that her summer was to be spent had flashed across him. But the cloud had shut down close again ; or else he had seen only a mirage.

Miss Wallace answered quietly, and rather incredulously, Dodge fancied, " Thank you, but it is out of the question."

How tall she was, how tall and erect ! The very lift of her resolute chin made her seem taller. How infinitely more he had always admired little, fragile, light-haired women, thought Calvert, with a feeling of sudden wrath, perfectly unconscious of the trend of mind which had caused this sudden stiffening of the girl before him, and which was perhaps, as much as anything, again a swift, indefinite measuring of herself beside the girl of his dreams, whom this man was to see so soon realized in the person of Joan Whetmore.

A few minutes later Calvert took his leave ;

and moved by a strange, unusual restlessness which increased steadily, at the end of the week he threw a few things into his dress-suit case, wired to Bob Everett, and started for Lenox the following morning, Friday.

He arrived there about three o'clock in the afternoon ; and as he stepped from the train, he caught sight upon the platform of two familiar faces, Bertram Linton's and Bob Everett's, among a gay crowd of dainty gowns and golf knickerbockers.

Bob saw him first and spoke to Bertram ; and both men darted forward with unmistakable pleasure on their faces. " So glad to see you, old chap ! This is what I call white, to take me up like this. Come over, and meet the crowd," said Bob enthusiastically. And in another minute, Dodge found himself bowing right and left to the confused, dissolving view of bright, attractive faces, masculine and feminine ; among which he looked in vain for the Wisp he had come so far to find.

In a few minutes all who were not athletic

enough to feel like walking the five miles home, were disposed among the various buckboards and carts in waiting amid the crowd of summer vehicles. Calvert found himself dealt into the back seat of a three-seated buckboard beside a very sprightly damsel indeed, who began to talk at once an endless chatter of nonsense, with an intimate familiarity which Dodge would have found a bore, if it had not been too amusing to one who was ever on the look-out for types.

Up to now he had been consumed with a secret wonder as to why they had all been waiting at the station. Surely it could not have been to welcome him. His natural modesty shrank from putting such a flattering, personal interpretation upon the warm and wholesale greeting he had received; and yet, apparently, no one else whom they knew had come up on his train. Now, however, his companion enlightened him.

"You are just too late!" she informed him gaily. "The prettiest girl in Lenox left on

the train which went out as yours came in. We all came down to see her off ; and she went away buried under flowers and books. ‘ The Queen is dead,—long live the King ! ’ ” she ended, with a daring little glance at Calvert from the corners of two bright, vivacious black eyes.

“ Indeed ? ” Calvert felt very indifferent ; and utterly unprepared for the *dénouement* in store for him. But he had a laudable wish to make himself agreeable. “ And who is the Queen ? ”

“ Joan Whetmore, of course ; the dearest thing in the world ! ” gushingly. “ The men were all at her feet, and there was small chance for the rest of us, I assure you, while she was here. It will be interesting, however, to see what you will do. Before this, it was a foregone conclusion that every new man would be her slave in twelve hours. I declare, it proved to be tiresome to the last degree ! Now there is a new, and therefore an interesting, scope for doubt. Did you feel any elective affinity

when you were being presented on the platform? Whose slave do you think you will be?" she ended archly.

While she had been rattling on, Calvert's mind had been so occupied with this new turn of the wheel, that he had scarcely listened at all. Now he gathered himself together, and responded in the same light vein, and with the expected gallantry: "Can there be any doubt in my case either, Miss McIntyre? Surely, that also is a foregone conclusion!"

Miss McIntyre gave vent to the absurd little giggle that punctuated all her remarks; while the memory of a quiet, musical laugh, filled with pure, responsive, contagious mirth, came swiftly into the mind of the man beside her.

"How well you said that," she retorted, in her high, clear voice. "Of course you had to say something pretty, but I think you put it more originally than most men would have done. That's because you are a writer, I suppose. Bob Everett told us that you wrote;

and that makes you so much more interesting. If you are my slave while you're up here, I shall insist on your writing me poetry, you know. How amusing that would be! I have never read anything you wrote, Mr. Dodge," she added, with an assumption of blunt frankness; "I never read anything but trashy novels. In fact I'm just a butterfly of the most frivolous description. You must tell me about your books, I'm *so* interested—are they *very* deep?"

Calvert looked amused. "I'm afraid I can't confess to any books yet, Miss McIntyre," he said, lightly. "Only a good deal of hack, journalistic work, and a small showing of dull magazine articles. Won't you please consider me as frivolous, too? I can plead guilty to a very light novel now in press."

Miss McIntyre gave him a quick, shrewd glance from her black eyes, which saw more than they pretended. "You, frivolous!" she exclaimed, with a shy frankness far more pleasing than her former manner. "Men with a

hollow up by their temples are never frivolous. It is n't in them ! But I'll try to teach you if you want me to—that is, I'll show you what it's like. I'll be a revelation to you of pure, unadulterated froth ; and then you can put me into a book later, if you want to. You'll get tired of too much character after a while ; and I'll be an excellent foil, a sort of whipped-cream trifle, after the solid courses, you know ! How long are you going to stay ?”

Dodge laughed in genuine entertainment, with a distinct wish that Miss Wallace could be here to meet this new specimen of femininity. How she would appreciate it ! He must treasure it all up to tell her when he got back. By the way, he would get back pretty soon, he decided suddenly ; since his reason for this trip was no more. There was that article on the East Side to be completed for the *Century* by the middle of July ; and he had small time or inclination to frivol away his days in Lenox. How strange that he should miss Miss Whetmore again ! There seemed to be some fate

against their meeting each other. Miss Wallace said she was to stay with the Everetts until she sailed on the *Teutonic*, which left the 28th of June—a week from to-morrow. He wondered where she was to be in the meantime, and decided he must find out from Bob. Well, now he was here, he'd get all the fun he could out of it for a day or two, and then give up this wild-goose chase, which was, to say the least, an undignified performance, and settle down to good, hard, remunerative, congenial work again.

“Only over Sunday, I believe,” he smiled, genially, after all this thought preamble; and Miss McIntyre never noticed the hiatus, for thought is more swift-winged than any winged creature to which we can compare it. She looked really disappointed, and pulled down the corners of her laughing mouth with a droll expression of regret which she could not hold for more than an instant, however. Dolly McIntyre's mouth, so some of her friends were mean enough to insinuate, never retained any

expression long which prevented her from using it for its natural purpose of talking.

"Oh, what a shame! But we shall keep you longer, I know. Why, you can't be half a slave in two days. I have already the most enticing plans for the two of us. They cover all sorts of things and places—the golf-links, tennis-court, ballroom, canoe, summer-houses! Oh, you can't go so soon as Monday! I do all those things equally well, you must know. In fact, my only fault is that I am too in earnest over my frivolities. To be really frivolous one should be frivolous over frivolities, I suppose. How is that? You, an author, ought to know."

"No," replied Calvert, with a grave, deliberate sophistry, which, added to the twinkle in his eye, completely won Miss McIntyre's goodwill. "No, anyone who did not care deeply about frivolities would not be frivolous, they would be serious—you grant that?" She nodded. "And also, anyone who saw the frivolity of frivolities would be serious. You

do neither. So by two strong arguments, you are completely frivolous, do you see?"

"I see, perfectly. Oh, thank you, I am so relieved! I had the most horrible idea that you would prove I was serious, somewhere at the bottom, and then I should have had to live up to the discovery. It's so delightfully refreshing and restful to know certainly that one has absolutely no foundation, and therefore that it would be futile to try to improve a germ that didn't exist. I know those are horribly mixed metaphors, but it's all of a piece and you know what I mean, and that is the only important thing in life, after all, is n't it? Oh, here we are! That's the Lodge through the trees. Is n't it a dear, so Elizabethan! Have you ever been here before? I thought not. You'll love it, as we all do. I tell Bob Everett that some day, some girl will be actually driven into marrying him, in spite of his absolute idiocy, in order to be châtelaine of this glorious place. Bob's frivolous too, you know, quite as bad, or worse, than I am! I suppose you be-

long at the Annex. I think the house is full," she added, as they bowled up the driveway to a temptingly cool-looking, low, and rambling stone house, whose windows peeped out like the eyes of Skye terriers from the overhanging thatchings of ivy.

It proved as she said. The house was full ; and Bob led his friend across a close-clipped lawn, and then along a well-worn foot-path that wound a few hundred yards through a grateful strip of murmuring pines that quite suggested a forest, to the Annex, where comfortable accommodations for ten men had been arranged.

The two days that followed were full to the brim of plans, which matured one after the other with the natural, graceful bloom of a flower, and with never a hint of machinery or effort beneath—a result greatly to be sought after, whether one entertains on a large or small scale. Miss McIntyre, true to her promise, was unfailingly frivolous, to the great enjoyment and edification of Calvert Dodge, who

rewarded her Sunday night by telling her that she was the most absolutely consistent character he had ever met ; that she was flawless in fact, and that he should certainly put her into a book some day, if she would allow him. Then they shook hands at the foot of the stairs with a warm and genuine cordiality and mutual good wishes, for Calvert was to take too early a train the next morning to permit of a frivolous girl's company at breakfast ; after which Dodge strolled into the smoking-room, where he found several of the men gossiping intermittently over their pipes and beer. They yawned themselves off to bed, by ones and twos, Bertram Linton among the first. Bertie had developed a sudden taste for early hours which surprised and mystified all his friends, who had always looked upon him as champion owl of their social fraternity.

Calvert Dodge and his host were finally left alone, and after a few minutes, Dodge brought out the question he had been wanting to ask ever since he came, but for which he had not

found, or been allowed, the opportunity. "Who else has been here this summer?" he asked, with a Macchiavellian adroitness, which succeeded to a marvel. Bob ran over a list of names, a great many of which were well known to Calvert, ending with—"and then Joan Whetmore was here for nearly a week before you came. She went the very day you arrived, by the way. I do wish you had met her, Dodge. Just about your style of girl, I fancy. She's a peach, if you like! Mother and Sis hoped to keep her some time longer, for I can tell you she's a drawing card; but they changed their minds and their steamer suddenly, and sailed for Europe yesterday."

Sailed for Europe! The chase for the Wisp was over in reality then! For Calvert had neither time nor money nor desire to continue it across the water. In fact, he had been surprised to find how little the disappointment had affected him. He had fully expected to feel a decided annoyance, because he was well aware that the foiling of a plan was to him something

very hard to bear, and a thing which he very seldom allowed to happen. But somehow or other, he seemed more anxious to get back to New York than anything else ; and he had mentally patted himself on the head, and applauded his invulnerability to the wiles and persuasions which had been showered upon him to make him forsake his work, and stay with this merry party of "lotus-eaters" at Lenox.

"I never met Miss Whetmore," he said carelessly, "but I have heard of her through Miss Wallace. They are very good friends, I believe."

To his surprise, Bob Everett sat bolt upright in the Morris chair which he had elongated to its most luxurious capacity. "Elizabeth Wallace? Do you mean Elizabeth Wallace?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes."

"Why, do you know her, Dodge?"

"Slightly," replied Calvert, a trifle impatiently. "Why?"

"Well, aw—nothing—I do too, that's all," said Bob, leaning back again. He pulled away slowly at his pipe for a moment or two. Then he took it out and said abruptly, "Say, do you mind if I 'fess up, old man? I've got something on my mind; and you know my mind is too delicate to digest anything very heavy. I wish you'd help me out as you used to do at Harvard, Calvert."

Calvert smiled, although he felt a curious distaste to hear what he fancied was coming. "You want my advice as a sort of mental dose of pepsin, eh, Bob?"

"That's just about it," said the other thoughtfully. "See here, I met that girl in Italy five years ago; and I—by Jove, Dodge! you know what it is—I fell head-over-heels in love with her—that's just the size of it," he ended, with a burst that seemed to come from the bottom of his boots. "I don't really know exactly how to describe it, though. It was more, or *less*, than most men feel when they talk about being in love, because I never

dreamed of being presumptuous enough to think she would ever marry me. I simply adored the ground she walked on, and thought her, as I still do, the grandest, most beautiful, most utterly charming woman God ever made. I could n't begin to appreciate her, I know," he added with a wholesale humility, "any more than a fellow with a paltry soul like mine can truly appreciate the beautiful in art or nature, I suppose. But she meant just that to me—the incorporation of all that was most beautiful in the world ; and with it all she was so charmingly human, so impulsive, so full of fire and poetry, and yet friendly, and well—*human*, you know !" ended Bob, with a wild grasp at some word which would fitly convey his meaning. Calvert, meanwhile, smoked in silence, and tried to adapt this description to the tall, dignified goddess in the stained yellow smock, who had seemed so self-contained, so self-sufficient.

Bob went on. "Of course I proposed to her—proposed over and over again. I fairly

flocked there ; though, as I said, I had n't the slightest idea that she would ever take me. The truth is, Dodge," leaning over the arm of his chair, and dropping his voice to a tragically confidential whisper, "I don't know what in the world I should have done if she had. I knew all along I could never live up to her or satisfy her. I was utterly inadequate. She was an angel to me, and said all sorts of comforting things, so that after a while I got so that I used to propose just to hear her talk ; she had such a truthful, sweet knack of rubbing one the right way when she refused one. Once she described the sort of a girl I ought to marry and told me just how I'd care for her and how happy and jolly she would make me. And, by Jove !" bringing his fist down with a thud that sent the pipe flying on to the fender, where it shivered to bits unnoticed, "it's all happened just as she said it would. Only I've been too darned ashamed to acknowledge it till to-night. How a man could love anyone else after caring for her the way I still care is a

mystery! I must be a pitiable ass, Calvert, eh?"

The anxiety in his tone smote so keen upon Calvert's sense of the ridiculous, that in spite of himself he burst out laughing; at which Bob looked decidedly nettled.

"Oh, if you think it's just a joke!" he said gloomily. "Everyone thinks I'm just a kind of living joke anyway, and I'm sick of it!"

Calvert clapped him hard on the shoulder. "Forgive me, Bobbie," he said heartily. "I could n't help it, you were so awfully in earnest and self-depreciative. How about the other girl? Is the new Barkis willin'?"

"That's just the trouble. I don't know that! She teases me all the time, but somehow or other I think she would be—though I know I'm an awful duffer to say so beforehand. We just suit each other in every way," he went on, waxing unconsciously enthusiastic, "and we always have such fun together! Then she has such a comfortable way of taking a fellow for granted, you know; and hang it all,

I'm afraid to tell her about this other affair too. You, see I'm in a deuce of a fix all around."

"Not in the least, Bob; it's clear sailing. Go in and win! If number two is as sensible as you make out, and as I'm sure she is, tho' I've only known her two days,—"

"You know her! Why, who—how—did I mention her name?" began Bob confusedly.

"No, you were discretion itself, but her name is Dolly McIntyre all the same; and I can congratulate you in advance, Bob, if you win her, as I think you will. It's absurd to give the other thing a thought. As you say, it was never a marrying love, only a sort of higher platonic, and you never in the world would have suited each other. I know Miss Wallace herself would tell you the same thing."

"She has," admitted Bob, shamefacedly. "I wrote and proposed all over again, before I said a word to Dolly. Of course she refused again, too, but in such a friendly, matter-of-course way, that I plucked up courage to tell

her all about it. She wrote me the finest sort of a letter in reply ; but I felt as if I wanted to get a man's point of view. For somehow, I have the sneakingest feeling of disloyalty to something. Not to her—I was never ass enough to feel that way—but to—I suppose you call these things ideals, eh ?”

“ Ideals will answer. But, Bob, my son, the best ideal is the real ; and it seems to me you've got that right at hand. My advice to you is to tell Miss McIntyre everything, and leave it in her sensible hands. She'll straighten you out in no time, if she's the girl I think her. Good night, old man—cheer up, and don't forget to send me cards !”

Bob's face brightened. “ I'll do it,” he said forcibly ; “ my knees have been shaking over the notion that she'd have nothing more to say to me if I told her. In books, girls always seem to have some fixed idea of being first, and the only one, and all that. But I know Dolly is n't like that. She'll understand. I know I can trust her, bless her !” he ended,

with a fervency that Calvert felt would be sure to win the day with Miss McIntyre ; even if backed against the most gorgeously chivalrous, ideal hero, romance ever caparisoned for a lady's favor.



CHAPTER VII

IN DARKEST NEW YORK

" God knows it, I am with you

.

If to despise

The barren, optimistic sophistries

Of comfortable moles.

.
If thoughts not idle, while before me flow

The armies of the homeless and unfed—

If these are yours. If this is what you are."

WHILE he was at Lenox an idea had come into Calvert's head. As soon as he reached New York he went to the Century Company and suggested it to them, using as arguments the June number of the *Papyrus*, and several of the proof illustrations for his own manuscript. He emerged with the genuinely happy countenance of one who has succeeded in doing a good turn to a fellow-creature,

and at the same time pleasing himself. The result of all this was a note to Miss Wallace from the Century Company asking if she would undertake the illustration of an article by Calvert Dodge, entitled : " Summering in the East Side Tenement District ;" and adding that Mr. Dodge would supply her with all necessary details, photographs, etc., as data to work from.

When she received it, Elizabeth was puzzled, and found herself in the clutch of very conflicting impulses. One of them, and the stronger because the more sensible, was not to quarrel with her bread and butter, especially when it was handed to her by a publishing firm, the value of whose introduction she realized very keenly. The other, not so easily explained, was a feeling of irritation over what she was pleased to call " the impertinent interference of that insufferable Mr. Dodge " ; for there was no doubt in her mind that the instigation had come from him in the first place. Those keen gray eyes had penetrated her pride, the flimsy disguise of their poverty, and

he had been influenced by a feeling of amused pity for her assumed independence. She had felt the hatefully masculine decision of his glance and of his manner once or twice, and had resented it heartily. She longed to refuse to undertake the illustration of his article conclusively, with a plea of too much other work. But Elizabeth was honest, and Elizabeth was fair, and she felt from the first moment of reading the note that, struggle as she might in the face of her distaste, there was simply nothing for her to do but accept the opportunity gratefully, and as graciously as possible, for her mother's sake, and for her own. That is one of the hardest, possibly the best, things about poverty, that one can no longer revel in the carrying out of one's foolish, hot-headed impulses. No, that is the birthright of the wealthy alone!

And so it happened that when Mr. Dodge called at the studio the following afternoon, it was a polite and acquiescent Elizabeth, although a rather frigid one, who received him,

and discussed ways and means for combining to make the article an interesting one, pictorially.

Calvert had a new plan to suggest, which was that Miss Wallace should accompany him once or twice to the East Side, while he finished his notes, making sketches, and instructing him as to the points and arrangements of grouping which he should snap with his camera to aid with the pictures. It did seem the wisest arrangement, and moreover Elizabeth had long been moved by a strong sympathy and interest for the less fortunate in our great cities, and confessed to a very strong wish to see for herself just how the "other half" lived. Then, too, if she undertook the illustration, she felt that she wished it to be satisfactory to herself as well as the publisher and the general public, and she had small inclination to base her sketches upon photographic data furnished by someone else, by whom, probably, the very points most interesting and salient to her might easily be over-

looked. She had a very decided inclination to do her own exploring, but that, too, she suppressed, with the wisdom born of second thought, since a camera and pilot would be really of the greatest help in the world. After all, what did it matter? There was no reason for anything personal to intrude in the case. She would look at him, not even in the light in which she had unconsciously come to regard him, as Joan Whetmore's special property, but merely as a business accomplice, and as such make all the use of him she could, and endeavor to accept the inevitable with as indifferent a good grace as she found no trouble about showing in other purely business transactions.

The result of all this was that when Dodge left, it was with the understanding that he should call for her at two o'clock on the following Saturday, to make their preliminary expedition ; and also with the conviction more distinctly rooted than ever that Miss Wallace was the most utterly self-sufficient, utterly

independent girl he had ever met with, or even imagined ; and that she rubbed him the wrong way more than anyone had ever done before in the whole course of his life. " Hang it all ! " he thought, rather savagely : " I verily believe she would be rash and pig-headed enough to prefer to go down there by herself, and I declare, if I consulted my own personal inclination, I 'd cut the job of piloting her ; but of course the thing is simply not to be heard of. No woman could go about down there alone and be safe from impertinence and possible risk, let alone anyone so striking. I 'd let the whole thing drop, if I could ; but it 's gone too far now, and as it was my own fault in the beginning—though I might have known—I suppose I 've got to see it through. But women like that, who have such an ignorant idea of the hard facts of life as to think they can be young and beautiful—yes, beautiful—and yet expect to go everywhere, just like a man, make me tired. They ought to be locked up."

Saturday came, and the excursion passed off more amicably and successfully than might have been expected from the state of mind of the two belligerents. It was not hard for Elizabeth to forget herself, and even her companion, in the absorbing interest and sadness of the new sights that met her eyes. The squalor and wretchedness, and pitiful lack of air to supply the swarming denizens of the streets by which they penetrated, were facts which she had known vaguely, but had never fully realized. That part of the city to which they went that Saturday afternoon seemed a vividly-illustrated dictionary, defining expressions which had hitherto been the idioms of a dead language. And yet, with it all, the thing that struck her most forcibly was the uncrushable buoyancy of human nature. Through the dull, gray warp of misery and want gleamed constantly the bright threads of a woof of cheerfulness and even gaiety of disposition, which seemed, however, so thoughtless, so utterly at variance with the

life these poor creatures led, as to sadden, even while it amused her.

"Oh, poor, *poor* little mites!" she exclaimed, one time, when they were threading their way through such a narrow alley that opposite neighbors could chat cozily across it; "how can they laugh and play and sing! Should n't you think the frightful inexorableness of the life they are coming to would crush it all out of them?" Calvert's rather serious face lighted with a smile full of the loving, balanced spirit of a true humanitarianism. Then, "I might have known how it would shock and grieve you; how it would have affected any woman who sees it for the first time," he said, with a sudden regret in his tone. "But believe me, it is not nearly so hard for them as you are vividly picturing it. They have known nothing else from their cradles. There is nothing for them to compare their life to but this."

Elizabeth interrupted him hastily. "Oh, you people with the hard, statistical minds and

hearts—how I hate you !” she said vehemently. “That is a comfortable way to shut one’s self out from a natural sympathy and desire to help, isn’t it? To close one’s eyes, and say the poor know nothing better—that they are comfortable! Why don’t you logical people argue this way then—‘If they who are born to misery, would not appreciate happiness over our comforts; *vice versa*, we who are born to happiness would not appreciate misery, if we possessed their discomforts!’” She stopped, struck with the absurdity of her own speech, and they both laughed. But Elizabeth continued eagerly—“Of course that is nonsense; but really—you say there is nothing for them to compare their lives with. Is not that just as absurd and untrue? What prevents them from wandering into other parts of New York, the clean, the well-kept, even the wealthy parts; what hinders them from going up-town to Central Park—do they not swarm there, these hot days, poor souls—and comparing the existence of the well-dressed,

well-fed children who drive and walk there with their parents and nurses, and——”

“Wait a minute ! That is true, of course, but do you suppose for an instant that the life of the richer class appeals to any but a very few ? I tell you it does not. To those little children, whom we saw dancing to the hurdy-gurdy a few minutes back, if they thought at all, it would seem the height of misery to be obliged to wear shoes and stockings and hats this weather, and to promenade stiffly up and down, tied to an apron-string, instead of unhampered as they are. While to their parents nothing could be drearier and more uncomfortable than to be obliged to live in a house, each family by itself, and to conform to amenities and conventionalities of clothes and food and behavior from which they are so blessedly free. No, I have pity enough and to spare for what is really pitiable, the actual portion of bodily misery which comes to them from the lack of sufficient food and air in summer, or clothes and heat in winter. But beyond that, surely it is fool-

ish to sympathize ; for believe me, the power to philosophize over their condition is utterly and mercifully absent from their disposition."

"Oh, I know," admitted Elizabeth, with her quick fairness, which was as ready and unsparing of her own injustice as of others, "I exaggerated. I realize that all that you say is true ; but *we* have to judge with the comparing minds that have been given to us. Thinking our lives the better and higher, is it not the worst cruelty of all when we realize this gulf not to try to bridge it, and use our every effort to try to teach them how to think, how to aspire, beyond this mere animal view of existence?"

"You are right and wrong at the same time, I think," returned Calvert thoughtfully, but glowing with the reflected feeling of her voice ; "but it must be done with infinite care and wisdom ; and just at first all our efforts should be directed towards teaching them how to protect and provide for their simple bodily needs,

before we attempt to go deeper and instruct the mind."

"I don't agree with you there! Surely it is better to inform the mind first, and then let that, of itself, devise a way to provide for the body."

"You misunderstand me. What I mean is, it is Quixotic, and even foolhardy, to teach them to think before we first help them to work."

"But that is just what I mean—if we teach them to think, we shall open countless new avenues of work to them."

"I think we both agree really; only we are approaching our common meeting-ground in such opposite directions; you, from the ideal, the theoretical; and I, doing the best I can from, perhaps, the ultra-practical side. The very best way is to combine the two. I am sure we both honestly believe this to be the best way when we think deeply. That is, never to lose sight of the theoretical, but to let it develop itself naturally by slow and sure degrees,

or else our reforms would achieve nothing with these unwieldy masses to whom ignorance of the higher things has been the breath of life for years, in many cases for generations. We would simply inculcate, otherwise, a passionate dissatisfaction which would end in more intense suffering, or wide-spread revolution, and the distress that comes in its train."

Elizabeth nodded understandingly ; and Calvert went on more lightly, but with an undertone of conviction which persuaded the girl beside him that his opinions were anything but the result of superficial, selfish thinking—rather, the outcome of an earnest study of the subject : " In other words, it is decidedly like starting a snow-ball at the top of a steep hill to go at this grave problem in anything but a spirit which has weighed all the facts, as well as all the theories. Once started, there is no stopping it. One does not know to what dimensions it may grow, or what disaster may result in its path. The very immensity of numbers, which this class of people with their untrained minds

comprises, makes the possibility for danger far greater than can be computed, if we force ideas upon them for which they are not ready. Ideas are dangerous things. They are like nitro-glycerine,—very useful and effective placed in the proper receptacles ; but misplaced or misused—well, you can imagine the widespread destruction !”

“ I am ashamed to think I know so little, have read so little. My chief source of information has been the way I have heard such subjects discussed abroad, among people who touch intentionally, perhaps necessarily, on the surface. But I have always had the most intense contempt for those who refuse to admit the suffering, and quote statistics at one to show how little real misery there is in the world. I think there is nothing so lying as statistics, because to my mind real misery is the sort that does not offer itself as a statistic, but oftener hides away with a pride that utterly baffles the census people.”

“ I agree with you, and, indeed, I want to

take back something too. I think the realization of the utter impossibility of effecting any speedy reform is apt to inoculate impatient people with the deadly poison of enforced indifference. If they cannot see the result of their labors, if even, in all probability, the final result will be invisible to their grandchildren, what use to spend time and breath and labor? And so all effort ceases. It needs just such zealous people as you to wake up the others and inspire them anew, not only with fresh faith in the eventual result, but with the feeling that it is incumbent upon us all to work, to do our little mite, even if the outcome lies hidden somewhere in the dim ages. You have done *me* good, at any rate."

It was strange that Elizabeth should feel no annoyance at her self-acknowledgment of this man's superiority of reasoning, but the fact was that, personalities aside, whenever their two minds wrestled upon impersonal ground, she felt a sense of actual pleasure in realizing that his was the wiser and riper of the two.

She laid down the fact that this was so, to the pleasure which everything gave her that persuaded her more and more, the more she saw of him, that Calvert Dodge was worthy of the girl whom she had felt from the first he was destined for,—worthy even of her dearest Joan.

She found very soon that serious sketching was almost an impossibility from the denseness of the population, which at the first hint of anything so rarely unusual as an artist in its midst, crowded about with undisguised curiosity, so that it was nearly as difficult to breathe as work ; and she saw that the camera would prove a most able abettor to the slight notes she was able to jot down in her little sketch-book. They both grew very much absorbed before the afternoon was over, Dodge, snapping right and left, whenever a point caught his companion's interest, with a reckless extravagance which finally exhausted the plates he had brought with him, so that they had, perforce, to return homeward before five o'clock.

On the way up-town they waxed still more

interested, planning the next expedition and Dodge gave Miss Wallace a very concise outline of the exact ground he hoped to cover in his article. Elizabeth had closed her studio for the day when she left it with Calvert at two o'clock, and so they had taken the Ninth Avenue Elevated directly home. When they reached the apartment-house he stopped and was introduced to Mrs. Wallace, who took an evident and unusual liking to him at once. Indeed, his manner with the elder woman was perfection, Elizabeth thought, as she watched his old-fashioned courtesy and charming deference. But then it is women like Mrs. Wallace, young or old, who arouse every spark of tenderness and chivalry a man possesses. He stayed for half an hour, and when he left, Mrs. Wallace was enthusiastic almost to extravagance in her praise of him—looks, bearing, and conversation.

“It is easy to see that he is well-born and well-bred, even if one did not know he belonged to the family he does,” she remarked,

complacently. "You heard him say that his mother was a Miss Raleigh of Virginia, did you not? And they are descended from the English Raleighs, the Raleighs of —shire, you know, and the very best blood in the land."

"Yes, Mother dear. What a head you have for county families unto the third and fourth generation, even the roving ne'er-do-weels of youngest sons who came to America so many years ago!" smiled Elizabeth, in her affectionate, teasing voice. "And is n't it a mercy that Mr. Dodge is vouched for, on his maternal great-grandfather's side? For now you will not bemoan my plunges into 'darkest New York,' with such a trustworthy guide!"

"It is a very proper feeling, love," answered Mrs. Wallace, placidly; "but I am sure when you told me he was a friend of Joan Whetmore's I consented to your going with him without another thought, and without knowing anything about his family."

"A friend of a *friend* of Joan's," corrected Elizabeth. "And by the way, Madre, you

must meet this missing link in the chain,—Mr. Linton. He has a pedigree, if you like, oh, miles and miles of it, connecting with the Scottish Highlanders by way of the *Mayflower*, so Joan says. And though he is a gilded youth of the period which shines with an entirely reflected glory of the past, there is something behind it all which seems to me to promise that he might develop a pretty fair arc-light of his own, if one could only lift off the extinguisher of burnished, conventional plate armor which he sees fit to live under !”

“What fancies you do have, Elizabeth !” said Mrs. Wallace, rather helplessly. She mentally stood on the shore and clucked like a puzzled hen who has hatched out a duck unbeknownst, and watches its unnatural prowess in an element entirely unfamiliar to herself.

“Mr. Linton is the nice publisher, sweetheart, whom Joan brought to the studio one afternoon, and it is through him that all our good luck has come. So you will treat him very prettily indeed, won’t you, when he comes

to call?" she ended, with a characteristic caress, which consisted in pulling out her mother's hairpins one by one, until she was in as girlish a gale as anybody could wish.

That night Elizabeth wrote a long letter to Joan, of which I will quote only the last few paragraphs. "I was so sorry to miss the steamer, but that wretched snail of an elevator boy kept your telegram a full hour. I could have wrung his neck! As soon as I heard you had changed your steamer I was prepared also to hear what Mr. Dodge told me when he returned—that he had just missed you again at the Everett's. It was easy to see what a disappointment it was to him to find you gone. He is a good deal of a dreamer, Joan, and I can appreciate just how strong a hold the unusual quality in this coincidence has taken upon him. At first I thought he was too much of a dreamer, and set him down as too pronounced a visionary to please you, dear. The more I see of him the more convinced I feel that my first impression was wrong. He

develops, on further acquaintance, a practical fund of common sense, tempered just enough with this sanguine enthusiasm to take away the sledge-hammer effect of one who is only common-sensible. Not that I think he is good enough for you by any means. But I do begin to realize that what chiefly offends me about him is brought out by the radical hostility of our temperaments, and my very strong conviction that he disapproves of many disagreeable traits which I possess, and which you, Joan, lack utterly. In fact, it is very plain on the face of it, that a man whose ideal is the Wisp would be irritated by, and just as surely irritate, a girl like me. I will write you more about him after I have seen more of him. Just now the thing that chiefly impresses me is his very evident determination to realize his ideal by meeting you, and the still more strange fact that every time I see him I am conscious of less distaste for the idea, and find myself discovering more ways in which he would appreciate and suit you."



CHAPTER VIII

TEMPORARY ALLIES

“ Whom towns immure,
And bonds of toil hold fast and sure.”

DURING the two warm weeks that followed, Dodge and Miss Wallace went several times to the lower part of the city and succeeded in getting together almost all the material necessary, while in the meantime Elizabeth busied herself at the studio over the elaboration of these heterogeneous suggestions. From the beginning Calvert had promised his companion a glimpse of a very characteristic interior, where unhindered and in perfect security she could sketch some excellent types. “Some personal friends of mine, some very great friends,” he had said,

and Elizabeth was growing much interested and curious. On their fourth trip, which they both expected would be the last, he kept his promise. They left the Elevated at the Rivington Street Station and dived eastward through three twisting streets to a tenement, across whose swarming courtyard they picked their way in accustomed familiarity with sounds, sights, and smells.

"I am ashamed, positively ashamed to realize how quickly one grows used to this sort of thing. I'm actually getting hardened to it," smiled the girl as she lifted a sprawling, tow-headed infant out of her path. But the tenderness of her smile and the gentleness of her touch as she did so were amplest contradiction of her words. Which contradiction Calvert reinforced when he said: "Not hardened, only prepared to give a help and sympathy that are a thousand times more useful than your first, more poetical feeling, because truer and wiser. Here we are!" as they reached the fourth landing, and he knocked at a door standing

half ajar. It was thrown open in a minute by a red and tousled-headed urchin, who burst into a howl of Irish glee at sight of his visitor.

“Hully gee! If it ain’t de gentleman from de Club, Biddy!” he cried, dragging Calvert forward into the room. Elizabeth followed, much entertained, to find Mr. Dodge shaking hands with a withered little old woman, whose face looked like a dried apple, but whose small, shrewd eyes shone out, bright and restless, from the wrinkled flesh. Beside her, on the floor, sat a little creature, whose beauty made Elizabeth draw her breath in surprise. She was about four years old, and her tangled, tawny hair and bright face made such a spot of brilliant light in the dingy room as to furnish it completely, to a beauty-loving eye. She had caught one of Calvert’s fingers, and was holding tight to it, with an expression of affectionate audacity very pretty to see. “Misser Dodge, gimme what ’s in de nittle lef’-han’ pottet!” she urged. Dodge laughed and

tossed her a package which he drew from the above-mentioned receptacle. Then he turned and introduced Miss Wallace to the three—Mrs. Mulcahey, Miss Biddy Mulcahey and Mr. Daniel Mulcahey !

“ How’s this, Dan, old man,” he added, to the boy ; “ what are you doing home at this hour of the day ? What’s wrong with trade ? ”

“ Wrong ? Nothin’,” answered that worthy stoutly ; “ dusty weather’s de stuff for us fellers in de shoe-polishin’ business. I quit ter-day ter bring home dem posies,” he added, rather shamefacedly, indicating with his thumb some pretty forlorn specimens which graced the window-sill in a broken beer-bottle. “ A lady guv ’em ter me, up on de Avenyer, and I brung ’em back ter Granny, afore they all faded out. I’m goin’ now ! Be you comin’ ter de Club on Wednesday ? ”

“ Yes, indeed,” replied Dodge, cheerily. “ I brought this lady to call to-day because she wants to make a picture of Granny and Biddy,

if Mrs. Mulcahey is willing. You shall see it in a book some day, Dan ! ”

“ Why could n’t I make a sketch of Dan, too ? ” said Elizabeth, who had taken a strong fancy already to the grubby, frank, and freckled-faced boy. “ If he’s busy now he might come up to the studio some day and regularly pose, you know,” she added to Calvert, while Dan showed a double row of splendidly strong, big, white teeth in an ample and embarrassed grin.

It was arranged that he should do as she suggested, and then Dodge departed with him, promising to come back in three-quarters of an hour, during which Miss Wallace could work in peace.

There were unlimited opportunities,—an unrivalled vista of chimney-pots leaning together, all awry, in a sociable, gossippy fashion ; well-stocked, flapping clothes-lines, festooned in all directions ; window-gardens, with their pitiable array of soap-boxes and vegetable-cans, whose contents were more anxiously tended than

many a conservatory ; and far below, a courtyard unequalled for numbers and picturesque untidiness. Finally, the room itself was a sketch worth taking away ; and the inmates most tempting of all. Elizabeth began on Mrs. Mulcahey, who mumbled out her toothless delight.

“ It ’s a great plasure, darlin’,” she said, in her thin, jerky old voice, “ and it ’s little enough there is for the loikes of me, but oi kape happy—oh yis !—though it ’s hard to chew these days, and oi can’t enjy me food a tall, a tall ! It ’s only the *gums* as is left, ye see ! ”

It was hard to persuade the old body (to whom the word portrait suggested a painfully rigid interval with an iron clamp at the back of one’s shaking head) that in order to be sketched she need not sit in petrified immobility ; and once, Elizabeth, looking up, caught such an unblinking stare that she was afraid if she kept her posing much longer paralysis might set in.

Next she stole a hint of Biddy's elfin beauty, while the restless child fluttered about the room like some rarely bright butterfly which has come out of its chrysalis into a dark garret, and seems to beat its beautiful wings in a pitiful search for its natural birthright of light and air. Mrs. Mulcahey hung over Elizabeth's chair and watched the progress of this picture most minutely, punctuating every other pencil-stroke with an impressed and delighted "Oi see!" which made the artist so nervous that she longed to shriek out her amusement. To interrupt the refrain, she questioned the old woman about her history, and the ruse succeeded admirably. Mrs. Mulcahey plunged at once into a rambling recital, with the garrulity of old age.

Her listener gathered by slow degrees that she had been born in the "owld counthry, County Cork," and had lived on a farm when a lass, that she had married a fisherman when she was eighteen, and that he had died and left her a widow "with sivin childer," at the

age of "thurty-two." "It was kind and good they were to me, thin," she crooned, in her thin, minor monotone. "The neighbors divided the childer amongst 'em, and thin they all took up a prescription and sint me acrost the wather, where oi lived out for forty year."

"And did n't you ever go back to the children?" asked Elizabeth, eagerly.

"Indade, indade not, miss! All me little childer died, all but one, Patsy—and he died too," she ended; which confusing statement Elizabeth discovered was explained by the fact that Patsy alone had lived to grow up. "He got married, and buried his wife in ten year, and thin he came to 'Meriky a year ago come Christmas, to bring these two colleens to his owld mither. And thin he up and died too, miss, and left the childer on me hands—and its dratted mischiefs they are!" she finished with a doting lunge of her stick at Biddy, who was swinging like a saucy little Brownie on the rungs of her chair.

"Oh, how sad to leave all your children,

and then lose them!" exclaimed Elizabeth, with an acute sympathy for the lonely life.

"Well, oi don't know! Childer is n't always good for their parents. Some gits kilt, some gits drowned, and some gits—everything, and goes to the bad entoirely!" said the observant old lady—a piece of wisdom which Elizabeth reported wickedly to Calvert on their way home, in direct refutation of his remark that the practice of philosophy was a lost art among the dwellers of the tenements.

They were destined to hear another refutation that very afternoon. The day had been stifling,—so hot, in fact, that when Dodge had turned up according to agreement, he had tried to dissuade Miss Wallace from going. But Elizabeth was adamant. "It's no hotter to work down there than up in this studio, where the skylight is getting to be a regular burning-glass," she said, decidedly. "Besides, if those poor creatures stand it all summer, I think we can stand it for an afternoon. *Please come!*" The last, unconscious argument of a pleading

which was rarely heard in Elizabeth's voice was what won the day, although she never guessed it. The heat had indeed been something terrific ; and Elizabeth and Calvert had been walking along in silent discomfort, moping their brows intermittently, with an unusual unanimity. Just as they turned into the Bowery, they passed a group of Germans, sitting on the step of a hot and fly-invested beer-saloon. As they passed, the self-complacent remark of the largest and burliest and most supposedly warm of the group reached them. "Yas," he said slowly, and with a ring of solid content in his tone, which bore evidence to its truth, "Yas, I don't believe you *could* find a cooler spot in summer than what New Yark is!" Calvert and Elizabeth looked at each other and laughed with a vivid enjoyment, which made them forget the heat for a whole minute as they climbed the Elevated steps. One very good thing about the other, so each had begun to be aware, was that it was never incumbent to speak openly of the humor of a

situation. Things appealed to them both in the same way, at the same moment, and all that was important was to look at the other for a silent appreciation that doubled the amusement.

“How did you come to know those delicious Mulcaheys? What a foolishly fascinating name that is to say, by the way. Do you notice how it leaves your mouth exactly in the forced position of a stage laugh—Mulcahey! Try it!”

Calvert laughed. “Why, I met the boy at a club I belong to, over by the river, and took a fancy to him. He is such a bright little chap. He took me to see his family one day. Is n’t the old lady rich? I should certainly have made an exception of her when I said there were no philosophers—she is a female Diogenes, if ever there was one! And what do you think of Biddy?”

“Oh, she is perfectly bewitching. I’m going to paint her some day. But it makes my heart ache to think of her growing up in that atmosphere. She will be so beautiful! One

longs to transplant her to some safe, happy farmhouse out in the open country."

"Do you know, that's what I've wanted to do ever since I first saw her! We must talk over ways and means some time. I need just your clear woman's head to help me. Surely, there must be plenty of good, kindly, farm people who would take the child for little more than the assistance she would be to them in time. She is too young to be separated from her grandmother, I suppose, though; and Mrs. Mulcahey says she would 'schmother in the counthry!' to use her own expression. At any rate, Biddy, and Dan too, must get away somewhere, for a couple of weeks or so next month."

"Indeed they must!" agreed Elizabeth thoughtfully. "What was the club you spoke of?"

The man beside her flushed boyishly. "Oh, nothing; merely a boy's club I'm interested in. There are so many types to be met there, you know," he added, in extenuation of what Elizabeth divined to be good works.

“I’ve thought of something,” she said brightly, “that I believe may do. I had a nurse years ago, who, like Mrs. Mulcahey, married a fisherman, and went to live on Long Island, down near Good Ground. She has a nice, comfortable, little cottage there ; and later, in August, when it gets very warm, Mother and I are going down to board with her. I’m sure we could manage to have the children at the same time. And then, perhaps,—of course I don’t know—but Martha is such a loving old soul, and she has no children of her own, poor thing, and so if she took a fancy to them she might, you see,—at any rate it could be easily managed, and with very little expense, for a few weeks,” she ended.

“The very thing ! nothing could be better,” said Calvert, delightedly, as she finished. “Thank you so much for thinking of it. We’ll consider their summering settled then ; and as for what you suggest about a more permanent arrangement, that can decide itself later. I can’t help hoping and thinking that

Biddy and Dan will win their way almost anywhere, into the right sort of hearts. But it's out of the question to think of your bothering to have the kids down there while you are. If you would be good enough to give me your nurse's address, I'll write and make arrangements for a few weeks now, before you and Mrs. Wallace go down."

"Oh, but no, indeed!" cried Elizabeth, warmly; "it would add so much to have them there while we are. We wouldn't let them trouble us in the least, except when we felt like it, and there is plenty of room for all of us. Martha says the cottage is such a large, roomy one. Oh, please, I have it all planned already! It would be lovely to have them in August, and it would be so hard for them to go now and then come back for the very worst hot weather of all."

Calvert shook his head, laughingly: "You don't know what you might be saddling on yourself. They are 'howly terrors,' as Mrs. Mulcahey often says, meaning full of animal

spirits—although they are both, I know, sweet-tempered children at the core. Goodness knows what riotous imps they would develop into with the sea for a playfellow! They might utterly ruin your own vacation.”

“In that case we could pack them off to a neighbor’s,” said Elizabeth, undaunted. “There are plenty of fisher-folk right at hand who would be more than glad of a little extra money.”

Calvert shot a quick, keen glance at the girl’s enthusiastic face. To his clear-sighted eyes it had been looking a little tired of late, and either a trifle pale or rather unnaturally flushed. He felt, with sudden anger, that the city was no place for her in this heat,—that it and the work were wearing on the vitality which she spent so luxuriantly. He was growing far too wise to venture a personal dissuader however. “Just when is it you expect to go away yourself, Miss Wallace?” he asked, casually.

“Oh, I don’t know. We have n’t decided

at all, yet. Some time next month, I fancy. When it grows too warm for Mother, I suppose."

"Don't you think that Mrs. Wallace ought to get away sooner than that? It struck me, the other day, that the heat must be trying for her, that she seemed just a little used up and fagged by it. I think older people feel it more than we who have so much to think about and plan."

Oh, subtle and harmless insinuation! But Elizabeth, nevertheless, was on the anxious defensive at once.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, quickly; "I've thought Mother seemed unusually well this summer. I have n't noticed that she was looking pale, and she was saying only the other day how much more endurable a New York summer could be than she had ever supposed. You see, we are really situated most enviably, with the Hudson on one side, and the Park on the other." Her tone sounded ruffled and a thought discouraging, and

Calvert hastened to retreat quietly, and in order, covering his defeat as skilfully as possible.

It had come to be a regular thing for him to stop and visit with Mrs. Wallace for a little while after each expedition ; and he had grown to depend on these half-hour talks with the beautiful and attractive woman, although Elizabeth's manner, on such occasions, was apt to grow very quiet and reserved. So long as they were alone together, and both interested in their common search for material, she was full of an eager suggestiveness which bordered close on friendliness ; but when the object which put her and Calvert for the time so in touch was attained, the old distant attitude returned, and she seemed at once as remote from any personal intimacy and as undesirous of such a thing as possible. After they reached home, she would leave Calvert and her mother together, with the most unaffected indifference ; going about whatever occupied her attention at the moment, precisely as if he were not present. Unwittingly to both of them, in this very

way he was gaining a new insight into her many-sided character ; and he found himself recalling, when alone, little ways of hers which he had scarcely been conscious of having noted at the time. Her playful, protecting, altogether lovable attitude towards Mrs. Wallace ; the unobtrusive skill and quiet despatch with which she seemed to put the room in harmony with herself as soon as she entered it, changing its almost painfully precise daintiness, which showed the impress of Mrs. Wallace's presence during the day by a few, swift, scarcely noticeable touches, which left one with a feeling that a fresh, sweet breeze had blown through the room, leaving the trace of Nature's fingers everywhere.

The second time that they had been downtown, Dodge had stopped at the foot of the Elevated steps and exchanged a coin for a bunch of sweet peas, offered by an old man who plied his sweet-smelling trade there. These he had given to Mrs. Wallace ; and always after that, whenever he came, there was the

same insignificant purchase, and the same pleased smile of gracious appreciation from Mrs. Wallace, who would hand them immediately to Elizabeth to be put in water. Another thing that lingered pleasurably in Calvert's mind was that very simple operation of arranging the flowers he had brought. The unhesitating choice of the receptacle most fitting in size and color, the exquisite daintiness in her manner of handling the blossoms, which seemed not so much to be arranged as to be allowed to fall into their own instinctive and therefore beautiful attitudes without a touch too many. Her indifference to his presence had, somehow, ceased to irritate him as it would have done at first ; for he had begun to want to study her movements, her effects, covertly ; and this quiescent mood gave him the most untrammelled opportunity for a silent, fragmentary note-taking, which gradually, if unconsciously, was formulating in his mind a newer and truer opinion of this girl who apparently needed and desired his appreciation so little.



CHAPTER IX

AN IMPROMPTU ROOF-GARDEN

“ Present mirth hath present laughter,
What’s to come is still unsure ! ”

FOURTH of July evening Calvert called at the Wallaces’, to find Elizabeth all alone in the little apartment. She greeted him with an honest surrender to his wisdom which filled him with an absurd exhilaration.

“ Yes, what you told me was true, every word of it,” she admitted, after she had given him a firm, quick hand-shake. “ I have been criminally short-sighted about that little Mother of mine ; and when I came home the other day after talking to you, I saw so clearly how pale she was looking. It seemed as if scales had fallen from my stupid eyes ; and so I coerced

her—actually, cruelly coerced her out of town yesterday. I took her to that little place near Good Ground where the old nurse, of whom I told you, lives, and promised her on my sacred word of honor that I would join her this week, just as soon as we finish that article.”

“I’m so glad, and as glad for your sake as hers!” ejaculated Calvert, heartily. But that remark was a mistake, and brought the quick lift to Elizabeth’s chin for which Dodge had grown to look closely, as a man anxious for the weather keeps an eye on the changing barometer ; and he hastened to add, “It was a great scheme to get her out of the city to-day, for it’s been perfectly deafening, has n’t it?”

Elizabeth made a little grimace. “I’m afraid I’m outgrowing my patriotism. Or at least, I am very willing to express it quietly. I don’t mind the cannon so much—a big noise seems somehow worth while, and adequate to the occasion—but there is an invisible small boy who lives in the next apartment-house who

has been firing off package after package of little firecrackers, one by one, at intervals of two minutes, all day long. They have exploded with the most maddening, meaningless little crack ever since four o'clock this morning, until I was ready to scream. I'm so glad you came, for I've done nothing but calculate for the past hour, one firecracker every two minutes for sixteen hours of sixty minutes each—how much does that make?"

"Stop!" cried Calvert, laughing. "You'll drive my gray hairs in sorrow down-town, if you begin mental arithmetic!"

"And the worst of it is, he has n't uttered a word or laughed a laugh all day long," went on Elizabeth, full of her grievance; "not a human sound from him, just that businesslike, unceasingly intermittent little crack!"

"Poor, lonely, serious little lad! How horrible to have to take a pleasure so sadly!"

The sympathy in his voice made Elizabeth feel like a selfish monster. "I thought *I* was the one to be pitied all along. I see it's only

the boy," she pouted. In this aggrieved mood, half pretended, half real, she seemed very young, and Calvert again was conscious of that queer little twinge of happiness. The truth was that she had been feeling wretchedly lonely all day long, and when there was no one to take care of, she suddenly, as is often the case, wanted to be cared for herself, and would have been grateful for any companionship at all by this time.

"I came up to see if I could persuade you and Mrs. Wallace to go over to River side Drive with me and see the fireworks. Would n't you like to come, anyway?" Calvert began; but the suggestion reminded Elizabeth of her solitary condition.

"Oh, it's too warm, and it's too far!" she said, in a discouraging voice. "I'd like to see them, though," she added, relenting a little, for it had been very warm and very stupid all day. "I wish we could get some view of it from here, but I'm afraid the houses will shut it all off."

"I tell you!" suggested Calvert, with a sudden inspiration; "what's the matter with the roof? We could get a magnificent panorama from there, and it would be gloriously cool besides. Suppose we try it?"

Elizabeth's brief spasm of conventionality melted before this seductive suggestion. "Gorgeous!" she exclaimed, approvingly. "Go and ask Brown if there is any way to get out, and if there is, that will be the very thing."

In a minute Dodge was back. "There's a trap-door and a movable ladder. Could you manage a ladder?" he asked, hopefully.

"Easily. If you're equal to carrying these two chairs up two flights of stairs and a ladder, I'm equal to the ladder!" She caught up a yellow liberty scarf and followed, with a pleasurable little feeling of excitement, while without another word Calvert picked up the chairs and strode ahead, carrying them as easily as straws. He mounted the ladder first and reached down a helping hand, which Elizabeth

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spurned. "My foot is on my native heath," she said. "Did you ever know a tomboy? Well, I'm evolved from one, Mr. Dodge! Oh!" as her dark head emerged from the little square door; "Oh! is n't this glorious! Why, there is a whole block of flat-roofs, is n't there? And what a delicious breeze."

She scrambled out with an ease which Calvert would have thought impossible for a being swathed in petticoats, and stood beside him on the ridged tin, looking along the scalloped vista of roofs which stretched to the north.

It was not quite dark yet, but the night was coming fast. To the left, low in the west, hung the tiny new moon, which brightened momentarily; and as they gazed, a golden snake etched its graceful length on the soft sky, its crest bursting silently into a cluster of silvery stars, which disappeared, leaving a little vapory cloud behind.

"How beautiful! Oh, and there, and there, and there!" cried the girl excitedly, as the dark city began to send up fiery blossoms in

every direction. "Oh, I want to have eyes all around my head ! I'm so afraid we'll miss something ! Where shall we put the chairs ?"

"Let's walk along a little. Most of the works are to be set off from Grant's Tomb, and that tall apartment-house over there will be just in our way here, I think."

They moved on, passing several chimneys, whose warm breath fanned their faces. "Poor, hot houses," Elizabeth said, fancifully ; "I'm so sorry they can't get out on their own roofs !"

Calvert arranged the chairs at a point from which they could get an uninterrupted view of that part of the city in which the special display was to take place. The long, curving Hudson crept, a silent, silvery stream, to the left ; and all around them lay the habitations of the thousands who were all more or less moved by a common impulse to-night. The thought struck Calvert. "That's what I like about a national holiday like this," he said, warmly, "the feeling it gives one that the whole world is kin. At ordinary times looking down

from a height like this, one has such a solitary feeling. One wonders, vaguely, about the myriad aims and thoughts which are animating a myriad impenetrable souls ; and the fact that we can guess at no single other heart in a vast cityful than our own, brings such a boundless sense of isolation, such a cold realization of the diversity of interests in this world we share together. To-night I feel in touch with everyone. Humanity is simplified for the moment, and we are all of one brotherhood, because of the remembrance of the loyalty and bravery of our common fathers !”

“ That is a pretty thought. I have had something the same idea, without putting it into words, sometimes on Sunday, when the whole world seems to rest, and nature’s quietness is extended to human nature as well, so that we feel our kinship with everything in the universe, and seem to be assured that we are all,—rocks and trees, animals, and the little human race, the work of one mind.”

It was very seldom that Elizabeth felt

prompted to express her thoughts so distinctly, even to herself. She was a girl to whom feeling was sufficient in itself ; to whom words seemed, at best, such an artificial, labored cage-making for thoughts and emotions, which without them could soar far into the infinite. But somehow, it seemed natural to be talking of inner things to-night, high above the world, and so peculiarly alone with this man, who at one and the same time gave her a disturbing sensation of her corners, and an impulse to be her real, natural self, even at the risk of shocking and surprising him.

“ That is a prettier thought ! ” said Calvert, in a low voice. Suddenly, to the right, an especially beautiful rocket rose, cleaving the sky with a slow, deliberate ambition and dignity that was very impressive. Up, up, up ! Both of the star-gazers watched it with a breathless interest, as if they could help it to mount by their sympathy. Its height was reached at last and it broke with a gracious completion and fulfilment that was absolutely satisfying.

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“They are all like lives!” cried Elizabeth suddenly. “That last would be a beautiful way to live—rising steadily and slowly, until all eyes are watching in prophetic encouragement. Then, at the moment of one’s greatest altitude, exceeding every expectation by a brilliant revelation, and then dying while the world looks on and marvels. So much better than to live on after one’s best has been attained—like that one! See!” eagerly, “to wait and turn earthward again, displaying one’s genius, not when one’s soul is inspired by the height and the stars, but after one has come back into the worldly atmosphere once more,—‘to be seen of men’!”

“Perhaps that one got an inspiration from the stars and took the message back to earth—less self-sufficient than the other, caring more for humanity.”

“No, he did n’t! It was mere earthly vanity. If the stars had inspired him he could not have helped revealing it when he was nearest to them. It is only when genius is

forced out of one by height of soul, that the result is helpful, because then alone it could be *true!* ”

Elizabeth was growing eager over her fancied individualities, and the man at her side responded to her mood with a zest that was very real. “How about that one?” he said; “guess which that one will be?”

“Neither,” said the girl, decidedly; “that one is going to overreach himself, I’m sure. There is something unnaturally theatrical in the way he takes his flight. He spends too much time on the flight itself. There, I told you so,” as the rocket, reaching its utmost, suddenly, with a slight explosion, went out in utter darkness, leaving a sense of disappointment in its wake.

“That chap fired his pistol at the stars right enough, but it was just a flash in the pan, poor fellow, and he made so much ado about getting ready that the *dénouement* seemed absurd.”

From the courtyard of a neighboring apart-

ment-house some one now began to set off Roman candles, whose soft balls of colored light flared and fled one after the other in quick succession, with a hollow puff of sound, across the night. At the same moment they were conscious of a diffusion of light, and faced about quickly to find the northern sky suddenly ablaze with a whirlpool of fiery stars that were flung out in a dazzling rain from the center. It was the beginning of the Riverside display, and after this, gorgeousness after gorgeousness followed each other in quick succession, till one almost wearied of the ingenuity which it must have taken to plan these complicated but instantaneous glories.

“Hello, there!” cried a voice, suddenly, which appeared to come from nowhere. Elizabeth jumped a little, but Calvert had recognized the tones and shouted back, “Is that you, Linton? Here we are, old man!” And in a minute they made out a black silhouette, moving cautiously towards them over the roofs.

“Great Scott! I’m blind as a bat, coming up

out of the light !” he exclaimed, as he reached them. “How do you do, Miss Wallace? How are you, Calvert? I did n’t expect to find you here. I dropped in to wish you many happy returns of the day, Miss Wallace, and would have retired gracefully after I had rung six times in vain, but the obliging menial down-stairs volunteered the information that you were star-gazing on the roof, and I rose to the occasion. I hope you’re glad to see me, now I’m here?” he ended, beseechingly, and Elizabeth laughed merrily.

“Of course I am. You are as welcome as possible to our roof-garden. It is n’t very much like a garden at first sight, perhaps, but there are our flowers,” and she pointed to an elaborate specimen of fireworks of the genus flower-pot which was glowing at that moment on Riverside Drive.

“Jove! You do get a good view from here, don’t you? I’m gladder and gladder that I came! It’s worth the climb.” And Linton settled himself luxuriously against a warm

chimney and then quickly removed to a cooler, if less comfortable, position on the roof, at Elizabeth's feet.

"How do you come to be in town to-day of all days?" queried Calvert, with a laudable determination to make his voice sound as cordial as Miss Wallace's had been.

"Work!" said the young man addressed, laconically, taking out a cigarette, which he held up mutely towards Miss Wallace, who nodded; whereat he proceeded to light it and puff away lazily.

Dodge and Miss Wallace both laughed rather scoffingly, but Linton persisted. "Fact!" he said, briefly and vigorously.

"Come now, Bertie, you're wool-gathering!"

"And don't you call that work, this hot weather?" he retorted, imperturbably. "Look!" with a wave of his cigarette towards a luminous nebula which grew slowly from a star which had risen quietly, "is n't that great?"

"Who is it, please, Miss Wallace?" asked

Calvert, with a droll appeal in his voice, and a low aside which seemed to surround their previous fancyings with an atmosphere of familiarity, which Elizabeth herself had felt and, therefore, somehow resented.

"That is no one,—*living*," she said, in a clear voice, which ignored the aside; "that is an angel. Isn't it radiant and beautiful? And did you notice how modestly it rose through its brief life? There's a lesson for you both!"

"Eh, what?" said Bertram, bewildered, "an angel, where?"

Elizabeth laughed. "We have been making believe the fireworks were people, and saying what sort of lives they reminded us of," she explained.

"Good enough! Let me into the game too. I haven't made believe since I was a little chap. There's a bumptious old duffer making splurge enough!" as a whizzing pin-wheel affair shot whistling up in the air, from somewhere beneath them, in a self-important

agitation. "I tell you what, let's *name* the rockets. That'll be fun!" he ended, entering into the spirit of the thing, but putting a personal interpretation on it which gave both Elizabeth and Calvert a curious little feeling of disinclination,—the rockets had been so real!

"Let the first one that goes up typify Miss Wallace," he continued, his imagination expanding to meet the situation. "Look well, Miss Wallace, this settles your career," he ended, warningly, as a rocket began its ascent.

Elizabeth bent forward with an absurd eagerness. What would it do, break near the earth, or climb to the heights she craved, and burst in splendor; or still worse, would it shoot at a star and "flash in the pan"?

Up went the emblem of her fate, up and on; but with a curiously deviating path, different from any they had yet seen, hesitating and gaining, hesitating and gaining, till—"ah!"—she drew in her breath with a funny little exclamation of involuntary relief. For at a

sufficiently aspiring height, the emblem of her fate had opened into a flower-like cluster, which shed a serene radiance on their upturned faces.

“Bravo!” cried Linton and Dodge, together. “Your success was a foregone conclusion though, Miss Wallace,” added Linton gallantly. “Now for Calvert’s. The next is his. I am setting up this little game, so I’ll wait till the last. There you go, old man.”

It was Calvert’s turn to feel fearful; and as he watched, he was conscious of the same odd excitement over the foolish play which had clutched at Elizabeth’s heart a minute before. The rocket started well, with a vigorous determination to reach the stars, which reassured him; but suddenly his heart stood still. When it had mounted to but half the distance it might have been expected to attain, it burst silently with a paltry spark.

For an instant they all thought that it was an abortive one, for no illumination followed. “Flashed in the pan!” muttered Dodge, with an ill-concealed chagrin. But suddenly,—

"Look!" cried Elizabeth, pointing to the spark, which swelled brilliantly, and then floated softly away up the sky like a golden dream.

"By Jove! a balloon!" cried Linton. "I congratulate you, old boy! You're a surprise and success as well. Does n't it mean that, Miss Wallace?"

"It is at least something more lasting than any of the others," said Elizabeth warmly. "Now for your fate, Mr. Linton."

"Oh, but let me out!" begged that worthy. "I assure you, this is too much for my nerves. A cold perspiration bespangles my brow! If I should prove a dead failure after you two shining lights, I assure you I should be desperate enough to fall to the ground like my own stick. By the way, they all have sticks that fall to the ground after the display—just commonplace sticks, Miss Wallace. What do you make of that?"

"Their outgrown bodies, of course," cried Elizabeth, readily. "The soul flies away in

that little puff of vapor that floats off after the illumination. Have n't you noticed it? But you sha' n't escape, Mr. Linton, or make us forget to find out your future. The very next one is yours, do you hear?"

Bertram groaned, "All right, I cave. But if there's one thing I detest above all others, it is being forced to see myself as others see me."

"There you go!" cried Calvert cheerfully, as another rocket raised its head above the roof-tops. "Good luck go with you, Bertram!"

Alas and alas! When the rocket broke, a long string of light was all that appeared; and that hung in the sky in an aimless way that provoked Linton to righteous wrath. "Did you ever see such a do-less idiot?" he cried in disgust. "It just hangs there, like a caterpillar from a branch, waving in the breeze!"

"No aim in life, Bertie," reminded Calvert, reminiscently. "What more could you expect? That's the penalty you have to pay. But you are a sufficiently brilliant object, as you dangle

before the eyes of the multitude, if you do appear rather aimless."

Linton puffed savagely at his cigarette. "Take care! the worm sometimes turns! I call this a beastly shame, to make an example of me in the heavens like that. Look, I'm actually turning blue," he added sulkily.

Sure enough, the thing was changing color. "You've grace enough to blush over your inaction, at any rate," laughed Elizabeth, as it became gradually crimson. "Why, see there!" she cried eagerly. For suddenly a curious thing happened. Another rocket rose swiftly beneath Linton's, which had hung fire so provokingly, and some spark from its trail evidently added the needed impetus. The two rockets exploded together in a blaze of glory that was ample reward for the long indecision.

"*Well!*" ejaculated Elizabeth, "how do you explain that, Mr. Dodge?"

"Some outside influence was needed to wake him up, I guess," laughed Dodge, in a con-

strained little way. "Your all-powerful 'drop' Bertie," he added in a low voice.

"Yes," answered that young man, simply, in an impressed tone, which showed how seriously he had taken the omen, and which caused Calvert to glance at him quickly. Instinctively, at the same moment, Linton looked covertly at Dodge ; and in the minds of both men, a name was given to that second rocket.

Linton leaned back on the roof, with his hands clasped under his head, and his face turned towards the stars. "Stella di nostra amore," he began to sing, in a clear, sweet tenor, in which a deeper quality, like an undertone of thoughtfulness, was apparent. For a moment Calvert struggled with an inclination to join in. There was something so irresistible in the familiarly sweet, sad, Neapolitan music. More than ever, to-night, it appealed to him, in some undefined, subtle fashion ; and almost against his will he began to pour out his appreciation in his deep, full baritone, which surrounded and blended with Bertram's higher

tones, as the deeper, richer chords played with a left hand on an organ encroach upon, yet harmonize with, the lighter, upper notes.

Elizabeth listened, spellbound. How beautiful it was, the dear, the dear old air! Oh, Italy! Italy! How the music fanned that southern fire of her nature, till the wild beating of her heart oppressed her strangely. Suddenly she felt that Calvert's eyes were fixed upon her as he sang, and in the same instant the passion in his voice connected itself with his absorbing interest in his ideal,—with Joan so far across the water. With the thought, the usual, swift sense of comparison, which always ended in self-disparagement and self-dissatisfaction, swept over her. Into the softened, glowing face which Calvert was watching as he sang, came the old expression of cold, unwittingly disdainful reserve, and at the same instant, the baritone voice ceased abruptly.

The tenor warbled on blissfully for a moment and then stopped too. Elizabeth had risen, and now moved uncertainly forward a

pace or two. Both the men followed her. She was standing quite close to the edge of the roof, looking across to the next house, which was here separated from the rest in the block by a narrow chute ; so narrow, indeed, that it seemed as if one might almost step across.

“ I have the most horrible inclination to see if I could jump over to that next roof,” she said, with a quick, little shiver. “ I believe I will try.”

“ You are crazy ! ” exclaimed Calvert, impetuously. “ The distance is frightfully deceptive, and besides, it would be foolhardy in the extreme for even a man to attempt such a thing.”

His masterful tone stung the girl. “ A man ! ” she said, scornfully ; “ why, it would be nothing for a man who had the slightest nerve. Don’t you agree with me, Mr. Linton ? ”

Linton had moved backward a few paces while they were speaking. For all answer he took three quick leaping steps, and before the girl could get her breath again he had landed lightly on the other side.

Elizabeth had gasped painfully, and in that one second, while his dark figure had been suspended in the air, she had blamed herself with an intensity that left her trembling like a baby. She could hardly get her voice, and when she spoke it was in a pitiful little whisper, while she clutched Calvert's coat between shaking fingers, as she divined that Linton was preparing to jump back. "Oh, don't, don't let him do it again!" she pleaded, her face shining white in the starlight. "Don't!—for pity's sake, stop him, Mr. Dodge!"

"Don't be a fool, Bertie!" roared Dodge, with an emphasis that checked the other as he was about to start. "You've almost frightened Miss Wallace out of her senses. Go back the other way, farther up, where the roofs join!"

"Oh, please, *please* do, Mr. Linton!" implored Elizabeth, wildly; "if you had fallen, I should have felt like a murderer! Go back the other way!"

"Why, it's nothing," laughed Linton, easily,

"nothing at all. I have jumped twice that distance in my time."

"I forbid you to do it!" said Elizabeth, with a concentrated earnestness that carried its weight with the reckless fellow.

"Oh, all right. Of course I won't if you don't want me to," he answered, "but it's really nothing, you know," and he turned and made his way back to them by the route Dodge had indicated.

Calvert turned to Elizabeth, who was still a little pale. "It is a shame you were so frightened," he said, considerably; "but Bertram's a famous athlete, you know,—used to beat us all in the high jump at college, when the mood took him to practise a bit. Funny that a man who usually seems so lazy should be able to keep his muscles so well in trim. It really was less dangerous for him than for most men. I suppose there was actually very little risk, as he said. But it was foolish to attempt it, all the same, and he ought to have thought how it would have affected you."

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"It was extremely daring," said Elizabeth, perversely, resenting this consideration. "I cannot help admiring his nerve, even if it was foolish."

She gave Linton a bright smile as he joined them, and said, warmly, "Mr. Dodge thinks you deserve the worst sort of a scolding, but I think it is I who should be lectured for putting the thought into your head. And anyway you did it so beautifully that, now it's over, I can't help congratulating you. But you must *never* do such a rash thing again," she added, quickly, as the horrible picture which her imagination had conjured up at the instant of the jump—of Bertram's lifeless body lying an inert, shapeless heap on the paved alley-way below—recurred vividly. If his foot had slipped, what an immeasurable gulf would have separated her feeling from the light tone she had just adopted! It was only chance that something so dreadful as to shatter her whole life with its horror had not occurred. She felt the strong necessity of shaking off the

shuddering gravity which this realization of the possibility of a tragedy engendered. After all, a miss was as good as a mile !

Calvert evidently divined her thoughts, and with the intention of diverting them, he drew her attention to a superb fountain of fireworks that was playing, unnoticed at the moment, and said, with a laudable but clumsy wish to get her mind back on its former happy hunting-ground : " I don't wonder they dance and leap in the air like joyous butterflies, freed from the paper chrysalises in which they have lain sleeping so long. I wonder if they dreamed there of this sudden release into the soft night air, and the exhilaration of the intense moment when they should flutter their brilliant wings in the eyes of all."

But Elizabeth had been moved to the depths of her nature, and a nervous, irritable mood was the result. She felt something in Calvert's voice which rasped her unbearably, just as a child who is conscious of its wrong-doing appreciates and resents the soothing words

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of an elder person who is striving to humor it back to reason.

"I'm tired of fireworks," she said, rather imperiously, and taking no notice of poor Calvert's pretty, if rather forced, simile. "Suppose we go down."

Accordingly, they retraced their steps across the roofs almost in silence; even Bertram a trifle subdued, strange to say. But when they had reached Elizabeth's rooms, and the two men were taking their departure, her manner towards Linton was gracious in the extreme; while Calvert had the feeling that, somehow, by some mysterious perversion, it was he who was in disgrace for Bertie's misdemeanor, and the scapegoat of the whole disturbing incident.

"When shall you care to go down to the East Side again and finish your sketch of Biddy, Miss Wallace?" he asked, just before he left. "We had better make an arrangement now, I think."

"No arrangement is necessary," she an-

swered quickly, with a chilling politeness. "It is not worth while to take your time again, since you have all your notes. I shall go alone."

"But I could not think of letting you go to that part of the city by yourself—" began Calvert, decidedly.

Elizabeth stopped him with a haughtily questioning elevation of her expressive eyebrows. "I don't understand. I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself. I shall certainly go alone," she said, in a tone that apparently settled the matter.

Calvert shrugged his shoulders, with the first approach to rudeness she had ever noticed in him, and let the subject drop; and a moment later Elizabeth's two visitors had left the house together.

"What part of the city are you bound for, Bertram?" asked Dodge, as they reached the street.

"The Waldorf, to-night; and for yet a while, until I get time to look about for permanent diggings."

"Then you were really in earnest this evening about being here on business?" inquired Dodge curiously.

Linton laughed somewhat bitterly.

"In earnest at last, why don't you say? I wish people would n't be so infernally surprised. It's true, though; and it's certainly time I was of some use in the world, if I'm ever going to be. I did hope you, at least, would understand, Calvert."

Something—a sort of genuine appeal in his voice—affected Calvert suddenly. "Don't be an idiot, Bertie; you know I always said you were cut out for a day-laborer, and believe in you down to the ground," he replied warmly. Then, more slowly, "I think that I do understand you, old fellow. And what's more, I think I can guess that there is a woman at the bottom of this new development of yours."

Linton turned and met his friend's eyes frankly. "I won't deny it, Calvert," he said; "and what's more, I believe there is a woman at the bottom of everything that's worth any-

thing under the sun. You understand, however, that I can't talk about it yet. It's all too utterly uncertain; but if there is anything in this world I can do or be to deserve her, I will leave no stone unturned, you may be sure. Wish me luck, old man!"

They were standing on the platform of the Elevated by this time, and as a Sixth Avenue train pulled in, Bertram held out his hand with an expression of eager determination. Calvert shook it earnestly, and in another moment Linton had stepped aboard and was whirled away towards the Waldorf; while Dodge, left alone on the platform, remained waiting for a Ninth Avenue train to trundle him down to his depressing boarding-house.



CHAPTER X

BELLIGERENCY

"I cannot draw a map of Love, and show
The ins and outs of all that boundary line
Where Friendship ends and Love begins ; ah no !
The art 's not mine.

.
"Some day, perhaps, you 'll push the chase too far
Within those hills, O rash and reckless youth,
And see the enemy surround you ! Ah,
What then, forsooth ?"

ABOUT six o'clock on the following Wednesday afternoon, Elizabeth Wallace was threading her way through Rivington Street towards the Elevated Railroad. She had had a very successful afternoon, and the familiar black sketch-box under her arm contained the most altogether satisfactory illustration she had yet made. It had been a pleasant visit in every way, and Elizabeth had not felt

sorry to have made it entirely by herself. Like unto Calvert Dodge, in the matter of good works, she was ever loath to let her left hand know what its generous fellow was about ; and on this her last visit to Mrs. Mulcahey, she had planned and executed several little parting surprises in the way of most welcome additions to the family wardrobe and larder. So that it was with a head covered with unmeasured Irish blessings, and a heart wrapped round with the warmth of giving, that she had turned homeward a little later than usual.

Several times while painting in the dark little room, she had caught herself referring, mentally and cordially, to Calvert's ready judgment in the matter of pose and general effect. The subject was one which had appealed to her so strongly that she had elected to render it in full color. Only this—Biddy, standing a tiptoe by the window, and "loving" a ruddy geranium which struggled pluckily out of a soap-box, and looked as absurdly out of place in its city tenement as did the brilliant

slip of a human flower. The original, by the way, dedicated to Biddy, was later sold, and brought a sum sufficient to have transplanted both blossoms to their natural soil and paid the gardening bills for an entire year. In the adventurous ray of sunlight which had pierced through chinks of roofs and chimneys to Mrs. Mulcahey's window, Biddy's hair floated and gleamed, a flossy film of coppery gold ; while flower and bright face laughed out richly from the sombre, poverty-stricken room. Such brilliancy of chiaro-oscuro was Elizabeth's special passion ; and the rare delight of managing with unusual success an unusually congenial motif stroked every nerve in her body the right way, and smoothed her into a veritable Sabbath mood of love and charity to all men.

It was this, perhaps, combined with the heat, that made her so especially radiant and flushed, and brought an involuntary, little, flickering smile to her lips, and an unconscious, dancing light to her eyes, as she walked slowly down one of the most ill-favored streets of New York.

At any rate she was a decidedly striking object, as well as an unusually beautiful one, for that part of the city and that hour of the day. So, evidently, thought one individual, a certain out-at-elbows, very disreputable, very unassociable individual indeed, with an alarmingly unsteady gait, a cherry-colored nose, one bleared and watery blue eye, and another most unattractive black one. Elizabeth, absorbed in her own satisfied thoughts, was unaware of his approach until he had lunged up behind her, and said in a voice half wheedling, half threatening, "I drink, leddy, I drink!" Whereupon she awoke sharply from her pleasant day-dreams, and with a disgusted glance behind her, quickened her pace perceptibly.

Until now no thought of the slight difference of opinion which had ended in her being in that part of the city without an escort had crossed her mind. Even now she was not at all frightened, only filled with a repulsive loathing for the ugly, bloated figure that lurched nearer again, and reiterated solemnly,

"I tell yer, leddy, I drink. Yes, I drink. She's shut the door on me and now my home is in er gutter."

Elizabeth glanced at him again, and the half-shut, deprecating expression of one eye was so marred by the angry gleam in the other, that she was seized with an hysterical desire to laugh.

"I der-ink!" he repeated, in thick and mournful accents. "You *mus' n't!*" gasped the girl; and then the absurdity of the speech, combined with her growing nervousness, was too much for her and her mouth twitched involuntarily to a smile. Whereat a wicked, leering expression leaped into the man's face, and with a maudlin, drunken laugh, he reached out and grasped her loosely yet roughly by the arm. At the contact, Elizabeth's courage oozed instantly from her, and she did what any most ordinary, feeble-minded woman would have done—dropped her sketch-box, screamed, and glanced wildly around for succor, with a quick need springing in her heart which materialized before she could even recognize it.

Hurrying up behind came a tall, familiar figure, whose right hand shot suddenly out and grasped Elizabeth's tormentor firmly by the back of his rusty coat collar. So grasped, he was shaken vigorously like a puppy till his teeth chattered and his little eyes rolled wildly. The motion seemed to clear his head, however, for when Calvert let him go with a stern—"There! I hope that will teach you not to molest a lady again! What do you mean, you scoundrel?"—he touched his battered hat-rim sheepishly, and saying, meekly, "Nothing, sir. Thank you, sir," departed with such despatch that his course was almost straight.

Calvert turned to Elizabeth with an excited flash in his eyes. But his voice was quiet enough and anxious enough as he asked, rapidly, "Did that rascal hurt you or insult you before I got here? If he did I'll catch him again and run him in for it!"

"Oh, no," said Elizabeth, quickly; "I don't think he really meant to hurt me. He did n't touch me at all until just as you came up.—He

drinks," she added, nervously, and explanatorily, for that had been the one fact impressed upon her before she had become so alarmed.

"So I should infer, the brute!" answered Dodge, very seriously, and then they both laughed at her superfluous statement of the self-evident fact. He felt that Elizabeth was under a strain and that the laugh relieved her nervousness.

It did immensely, and she recounted the whole experience for his edification, and then, pulling herself up abruptly, turned towards him, holding out her hand. "I have n't thanked you yet. How rude of me!" she said, smiling a little. Then, catching the answering light in his eyes; "I see that you are thinking you were right about the unwisdom of my coming down here alone. It's no use denying it, for your eyes are twinkling the 'I told you so,' which your manly dignity prevents your mouth from actually saying. But I still hold that there is small danger. This afternoon I admit was an exception; but I am sure that I

might walk here forever and never meet with such an experience again."

The uncertain bravado of her tone failed to do anything but amuse Calvert, who was, for the moment, in a royal mood. One might have laid this to the fact that he had just demonstrated his opinion in the most satisfactory way. What one of us is disinterested enough not to be glad of such self-substantiation! In reality, however, that point was completely subordinate at present, and the elation which flooded his soul due entirely to the fact that he had been able to give actual bodily help to this girl beside him, whose obstinate fearlessness and wilful independence, he was coming to perceive more and more certainly, was but a proud shield held ever before an unusual sensitiveness, a most rare womanliness. During that brief interval, while he was administering the merited chastisement, trivial and momentary as the incident might appear, the fierce world-old desire of soul and body to render service and succor to one woman had

thrall'd him so masterfully that it had taken every ounce of will to summon common sense enough to let the punishment fit the crime, and not lose sight of the pitifully irresponsible state of the wretched creature in his grasp. As they walked on, however; with the remembrance of that sudden, fierce sublimation of self, came also the realization of what such godlike rage meant—the conviction that it was not alone Elizabeth's safety and welfare which he desired so savagely, but the personal right and privilege of securing it.

The thought was disquieting, and sobered him instantly. As they took possession of a double seat in the Elevated train, Calvert said abruptly, "I saw Bertram to-day. We took lunch together. He has thrown himself into business with his whole soul, it seems. Did you know that he had taken the position of art-editor, at *Scrivener's*?"

"Yes," answered Elizabeth, interestedly; "he came to see me last night and told me all about it. I was so surprised. If ever a

man seemed in earnest, he does. It is odd, for I had fancied, from all I had heard, that he was the very essence of dilettantism personified."

"No, indeed," answered Calvert loyally, "he is anything but that at the core. Bertram has been his own worst enemy. He has one side which would have made the most determined plodder of him if he had been born on the bottom rung of a hod-carrier's ladder. Perched at the top of a social stair-case, he is out of place, and his sense of humor, his self-ridicule, have so far kept him inactive. He enjoyed the contemplation of this incongruity of his two natures, I believe; but it was only a matter of time when the stronger self would refuse to be laughed at any longer. You're right, he is in earnest, and in his element at last, with his mind completely submerged in the concentration necessary to the work."

"Do you think it will really last?" asked Elizabeth. "I wondered, the other night, whether he were not too impulsive to be thoroughly stable."

“No, you're wrong there. He is stability itself at bottom. That jump of his, though I confess it looked like a grand-stand play, was not so in the least. It was the merest trifle to Bertram, only a glimpse of his steady supply of reserve energy. What made it seem impulsive was the fact that this reserve power has been so contained all his life. I have always thought the blood of some mighty old peasant ancestor is in his veins out of all proportion to the thinner, bluer kind. He is simply full of latent energy, mental and physical; and as I say, it needed only some influence strong enough to push aside and sober the lighter self that always stood by and mocked at the prosaic stability of the real man underneath. It is as if some great, strong, stocky horse, with the power to pull a wagon-load of granite every day and all day long, had allowed himself to be harnessed to a light and irreproachable dog-cart. He could pull that, oh yes! And for a time it was amusing to persuade people he was in the proper place!”

The quick thought darted through Elizabeth's brain—"Yes, and you are like a race-horse, plodding faithfully along in harness; doing ordinary work well because it is your nature to do everything well, but fitted above all things for a freer, fleeter life." All she said was, "I believe you are right. One must feel that his enthusiasm is genuine. But I don't like your saying it took some outside influence to make him begin to live his real life; although it would be interesting to know just what has decided him to desert the dog-cart, and employ all that superfluous energy, would it not?"

"Very!" answered Calvert, in a curious tone.

"Why, do you know?" asked Elizabeth eagerly.

The man looked at her an instant in a grave, questioning sort of way, in such a questioning way that, unaccountably to herself, for she was still overwrought, Elizabeth felt herself growing warm beneath the scrutiny of his glance.

Calvert turned his eyes slowly away. "I

think I do ; but it is all pure supposition. Oh, it would probably have come about any-way. Sooner or later, the scoffer would have had to go to the wall, I fancy." Then—"Let me tell you about something that happened when we were out West together. You knew, didn't you, that we were on the same ranch in New Mexico one summer?"

"No, I had not heard it. Do tell me about it!" said Elizabeth, responsively. "When were you out West, and why?"

"It was three years ago. I had been hustling hard as night-editor of a paper in Cincinnati. It was a campaign year, and I suppose I drew a little too heavily on my nervous strength. At any rate, I had one pretty bad headache which began the first of July and lasted till well into the fall, when I was ordered to play farmer for a while—to use my body and give my brain a rest. Well, I played farmer, let my mind vegetate with a vengeance all that winter, and forgot that there was such a thing as paper or pens in the world. I did n't

even write a letter : there was nobody whose happiness depended on me, fortunately. But I can tell you I was glad to see Bertram when he rode quietly into the ranch one night. It seems he was passing through Cincinnati on his way home after a winter on the Pacific coast, and an incidental trip to Honolulu. He looked me up at the office, got my address, and came down to New Mexico to make a call, and see how I was getting on. It was good to see him, and I made no bones about it, and—well, the result was that he stayed all summer, and we roughed it together, and grew better friends than ever. He took to the open-air drudgery like a native cowboy. I had suspected his cleverly hidden practical side in college, and he confessed and proved it to me that summer. In fact, it was all I could do to prevent him from buying a ranch and settling out there. For a man of his tastes and responsibilities that would never have done, and I talked him out of it, although I have wondered several times since whether I did

wrong, and gave the real Bertram too strong a set-back. However, here 's the story I started to tell.

“ There was a chap on the next ranch to us, a Mexican, and a rough, brutal sort of a fellow, who had a bad name all over the country, with several ugly stories to his discredit. For some reason or other, Bertram, who disliked him as everyone did, antagonized him at once. They had several wordy bouts, in which Bertram invariably came out ahead, and finally the chap actually accused Linton of double dealing in a round-up, and they had a stiff quarrel and nearly came to pistols. More than one in the neighborhood nursed a silent, smouldering hatred and suspicion against LaLoup, which the least tangible proof of his crookedness would kindle into a flame. One afternoon, Bertram started to ride twenty miles to the post-office, and as he rode away LaLoup (who was slightly unsteady, and had been bragging and threatening about Bert among a knot of cowboys), rode after him, and we saw them

join forces about a quarter of a mile across the plain. I hated to see them go off together, but I called myself a fool for worrying, as I knew LaLoup was more of a windbag than a villain, and that he was too cowardly to risk harming Linton openly. Bertram told me what happened, long afterwards. It was this way. It seems they rode on for some time together, LaLoup growling and snarling like an angry dog, and Bert, as you can imagine, calm and polite as could be, but infinitely irritating. Suddenly, about seven miles from the ranch, the horse Bertram was riding caught his hoof in a hole, twisted his ankle, stumbled, and then, somehow, all in a minute, his rifle went off and sent a bullet whizzing through his arm, up into the shoulder, tearing the flesh and opening an artery. The blood—am I making you faint, Miss Wallace?”

“No, indeed, no *indeed!* go on!”

“Bertram says he must have swayed and fallen, sliding off the horse in a sort of stupor from the pain; for, the next thing he knew,

LaLoup was at his side, begging him like a maniac, for the sake of all that was holy, not to die, because if he did there would not be a soul in the country-side who would not believe it was he, LaLoup, who was responsible ! Bertram said the truth of it was clear to him in a second. He knew, too, that lynch-law would take the thing in hand, for LaLoup had all but put the rope about his neck several times already. The pain and faintness must have been terrific, and Linton had no doubt himself that it was all up with him ; but he said to me afterwards, that at the time the idea did n't frighten him in the least—that everything, life itself, looked so out of proportion and unreal and absurd, and that LaLoup's whining voice and pitiful antics of terror filled him with nothing so much as a wild desire to laugh. Instead, he directed the man to rip his shirt sleeve and bind up his arm above the wound with a rough tourniquet. And then—weak and shaken and spent as he was from the pain and loss of blood—he got on his horse with LaLoup's help, grit his teeth,

and rode every step of the way home to the ranch.

“As he staggered into the hallway where we were all sitting, he tried to smile with all his old nonchalance, but it was a ghastly attempt. Although the night was so cold that there was a heavy frost, I could see great beads of perspiration on his forehead, and his eyes were sunk back so that his face looked like a skull. ‘See here, you fellows,’ he gasped, ‘the sorrel stumbled,—my rifle shot me!—LaLoup helped me home—guess I ’m done for, Calvert, old man,’—and off he went in the deadeast faint I ever saw. He was out of his head for days, and even though he did n’t die, LaLoup would have been dead and buried by the time he recovered if it had n’t been for that last speech of his. But I don’t believe there’s another man in the country who could have borne the pain and strain of that seven-mile ride. It was sheer endurance and heroism,—clean grit, as they called it out there! You see the stuff he’s made of?”

Elizabeth's eyes were shining, and Calvert thought, as he looked at her, that her expression alone was enough to repay a man for even more than the brave deed he had been recounting. The story told, and told so vividly, with the quiet loyalty and restrained enthusiasm of Bertram's best friend, had made a most powerful impression upon the girl. She drew a long breath as she said, simply, "I'm so glad you told me. It was one of the finest things I have ever heard of a man's doing. It does one good to know such spirit and bravery are left in the world!" To herself she thought; "What a friend—what a *friend* this man is!"

Alas! that we cannot live long on the rarefied heights! Alas, that the heights imply unquestionable valleys! Alas, that these two who had so glowed in common appreciation of a fine deed that they had each, in a different way, risen to better possibilities for themselves—should descend to a commonplace, personal quarrel at the close of the long ride!

As they turned into Elizabeth's street, for

the first time the strangeness of Calvert's opportune appearance that afternoon flashed into her mind. To neither of them, curiously, had come the thought that she had not questioned it before. It had somehow seemed most natural at the time; while their ensuing absorbing conversation had put everything else out of her head, and the incident which had reunited them was completely forgotten.

"What a coincidence it was, your coming to my rescue this afternoon! How did you ever chance to be there just in the nick of time? I thought you had finished all your work."

Elizabeth spoke lightly, and with such utter inconsequence that Dodge, in the reaction that is so apt to follow magnanimity, had a sudden, savage impulse to open her eyes to the inconvenience her wilfulness had caused.

"It *is* finished," he said, stiffly; "I went simply and solely to see that you didn't get into trouble down there by yourself."

Elizabeth stopped short. "You went there on my account?" she demanded, slowly, a

deep flush of anger mounting to her cheeks. Oh, it was too humiliating to be treated like a naughty child! "And how did you know I was going to-day, may I ask?"

Calvert's temper rose at hers. She might just as well know the whole truth now, he blustered inwardly, and learn how ridiculous her independence was. "I did not know. I have gone down every afternoon to Rivington Street. Do you suppose any man of any discretion whatever would allow you to make such a foolhardy trip alone?" he said, doggedly.

"You have gone down every afternoon to Rivington Street?" Elizabeth repeated, in an astounded voice. "Why," she laughed an irate, sarcastic little laugh, "you are indeed unnecessarily punctilious about my conduct. And pray, is it possible that you have had nothing better to do than walk up and down Rivington Street, lying in wait for me? Or perhaps you are gathering material for a detective story? It would be a new departure,

but after this I should fancy you might be competent to write one."

"I did not walk up and down Rivington Street," flashed Calvert, his anger now thoroughly kindled; "I went to the Rivington Street Station at two o'clock and stayed until three. I knew you would be going between those hours if at all; and this afternoon, when I saw you, I simply kept you in sight. That is all. If nothing had happened, you would never have known anything about it. If you choose to be angry, now that I've told you, it is no further concern of mine. I did what seemed to me to be my plain duty. I think you must admit that, as things turned out, it was well I did 'shadow you.'"

Elizabeth shut her teeth hard. She was in a tumult of wrath, such as she had never been conscious of before. It was all too utterly unbearable! While the fact that, as he said, there had turned out to be reason for his presence, added the last drop of bitterness.

"It was nothing but chance!" she flashed

back excitedly. "And it is an ungentlemanly thing for you to have presumed as you have done! What if I am independent, even to the verge of danger? What if I do outrage every tenet of your narrow, conventional creed of what a woman should be and do? I, I alone, am responsible. I have my own life to live, and I ask nothing but to be allowed to live it as I must,—the right that belongs to every working-woman as well as to every working-man. Who are you, that you should dispute my right, and force me into the false position of a sheltered woman who has nothing to do but claim privileges? You are cruel—and all because you would achieve your man's point, and prove me unwomanly and *outré!*"

Her voice broke at the last, and she stopped and turned from him, breathing quickly; her heart hot with the cruel shame which is the result of friction between impulsive wrath and dignity. Something behind the swift rush of words and reproaches had touched the very core of the man's sympathies, and abased his soul to the

dust. His gray eyes grew dark with feeling, as he said, in a deep, constrained voice, "Miss Wallace, you wrong yourself and me too. I did this thing because of no cruel wish to humble your independence, or prove my own point. It is because I have come to perceive so clearly the real self which you hide so bravely, that I have acted in this way. Presumptuous as it seems to you, and misguided as it may have been, believe me, it came from an infinite comprehension of your true needs, and an infinite veneration for the noble courage of your daily life."

As she listened, and heard the sincerity which rang through the rather stilted words, the girl was conscious of a curious sensation, as of the insidious undermining of all the bulwarks which pride had built high about her, and which she had sustained at the cost of purely nervous energy. It was as if it had all been made of quicksand, which was slipping, slipping ; while she allowed it, and stood by as if in a trance, watching the demolition of all her labor, and

was even conscious of a certain relief and sweetness at the thought that someone was entering her lonely citadel. She roused herself with a mental shock. Who was it that was striving to enter? The one who, of all in the world, must be kept at arm's length. Nothing, nothing but misunderstanding was possible between them. He whose whole character and mind demanded by natural selection a different type of woman, had had the audacity to dissect her scientifically—this writer of books, this creator of types! To the rescue of the falling bulwarks!

“You are all wrong,” she said icily. “My life is perfectly congenial. I am fitted for it in every way. I need and ask no sympathy.” She even summoned a smile, conventional and coldly polite, to her lips. “You must pardon me if I was hasty, and forgot the service you rendered me this afternoon. Remember I am not a fit subject for knight-errantry, and so do not quite know how to accept it graciously. Here we are at the apartment. Thank you, and good-night.”

Calvert took her hand and held it closely for a second. "You would be incomprehensible to most men," he said shortly ; adding to himself as he turned away, " I would to Heaven you were still so to me !"



CHAPTER XI

A DESERTION

"Oh, world as God has made it ! all is beauty ;
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty."

SLEEP was one of her rights, as a working-woman, which Elizabeth insisted upon with the most consistent severity ; and she was in the habit of obtaining it, by fair means or foul, after a highly original, if spurious, method of her own. When anything about her life or work troubled her, and she foresaw a night of sleepless worry ahead, she would reason thus with the self that melancholy had apparently marked for its own—"If you'll only leave me alone to-night, I'll *promise* to worry two hours in the morning !" If it was an unusually obstinate case—"Yes, I'll even

promise to worry three hours, if you'll only let me go to sleep now."

Hitherto, the plan had always proved successful. Her credulous other self had retired gracefully from the field, and hypocritical Elizabeth had slept the sleep of the just, well aware that when morning came, with its practical daylight and its full measure of work pressed down and running over, the little bargain of the night before would never so much as be referred to again.

What was her chagrin, therefore, to find, on the night following the escapade just chronicled, that this time-honored subterfuge was useless. Despite all she could do, sleep lurked ever coyly just out of reach, till far into the morning; and during the long hours, the dread tyrant of wakefulness chained her mind to her restless body, and compelled her to look helplessly on, while a procession of distorted, introspective thoughts—endless as a stage procession, which repeats itself in a monotonous, unbroken chain—paced relentlessly

through her brain. And this, whether her eyes were sealed behind stubborn lids, or sought an impossible focus in the outer blackness. Her naturally healthful, sensible self rebelled fiercely against this unbidden invasion of her consciousness ; and by the time her open window showed, at last, a gray square against the wall, and objects began to emerge out of the shadows and reconstruct an individuality for the daylight, she was utterly disgusted with herself ; and then and there she made a new bargain with her tormentor.

“ I admit I ’m morbid,” she said, “ yes, and nervous—two traits I utterly despise. But it ’s only because I have been doing altogether too much work lately, and because I was goose enough to be frightened and upset this afternoon. If you ’ll only let me go to sleep, I ’ll pack up to-morrow, join Mother at Good Ground, and not paint a stroke for three weeks ! And what ’s more, I really mean it, this time ! There, will that satisfy you ? ”

It did. Her sincerity was unmistakable ;

and in a few minutes Elizabeth drifted away on a deliciously dreamless tide, to awake, several hours later, refreshed and contemptuous of the night's long misery, which, in the light of a new day, shrivelled to something quite too trivial and unimportant even to remember, of use only in that it had bound her, in honor, to begin her vacation without delay. Elizabeth invariably had a reaction when she had finished a season of concentrated work, and this morning she felt like a new creature, full of holiday joy and freedom, as she flew about, preparing for departure. By twelve o'clock she had packed and expressed her trunk and turned her key in the tiny apartment.

There remained only one last task, the despatching of her illustrations for the East Side article. These were all at the studio, with the exception of her yesterday's sketch. With that tucked under her arm, she hurried down to the Velasquez, collected them all and addressed the package to Calvert Dodge.

The studio looked close and dusty and

unattractive to the girl's mind, already reveling in the fresh and limitless open, whither she was bound. It seemed incredible to her that she could have borne the heat and cramped confinement so long without rebelling. It is odd how content we can most of us manage to be with our surroundings when they are inevitable ; and how it is only when pressure is anticipated that we dread it, and only when it is lightened that we realize the full weight of the burden we have been bearing.

Elizabeth possessed this happy faculty of contentment, of discovering the vital interest in whatever life she might be obliged to lead, to rather an unusual degree. She recalled now, with an amused little smile, her late attitude of placid, conscious self-satisfaction, when, upon one of their trips down-town, she and Calvert Dodge had touched, at a tangent, a bored party of Philadelphians, some of whom Elizabeth knew. They were bound for Jamestown on their way from Atlantic City, and regarded New York, at that season, pantingly, as

a strip of desert,—hot, dirty, empty, and odorous, to be traversed with bated breath and as swiftly as possible. Upon learning that Elizabeth, unlike themselves, was not in New York on sufferance, simply because it was an unsightly means to a much-desired end, their meed of incredulous surprise and ill-conceived sympathy had left her with not one grain of envy. She had felt rather a full measure of amused toleration for people who not only ignored the vast numbers of imprisoned poor, but were entirely ignorant of the earnest life of thought which never stops in a great city, but pulses on unceasingly, by summer as by winter, quite as unheeding, in its turn, of the ebb and flow of a social tide.

But this morning it was different. This morning Elizabeth was conscious of an intense pity for everyone in the world who was not going to Good Ground, and found herself in a mood of childishly egotistical delight over her own special and insignificant little journey.

As she tied up her collected sketches and cut the string, she felt that she severed the last cord which held her to the city and work of any sort, for she had fully determined to keep to the spirit as well as the letter of her bond of the night before. Yet, as she stood on the studio threshold for one last look at the room which had grown familiar and endeared to her, as is invariably the case with the place where we feel at liberty to stable and exercise our special hobbies, her eyes caught sight of a certain compact little sketching outfit. With a feeling of half-guilty treason she seized it and slipped it, almost covertly, into her bag, assuring herself in extenuation that she did not intend to use it, but took it merely as a safeguard against painting attacks, which are apt to inflict one if unprovided for—like the toothache or a thunder-storm, when far from an apothecary or an umbrella.

At the door she met Bertram Linton just coming in, who, at sight of her, exclaimed delightedly :—" Oh, here you are ! I was afraid

you would be out at lunch. I have a commission for you, Miss Wallace."

"Not if I know it!" said Elizabeth, gaily; "'I'm off by the morning train' to Long Island. You've made a mistake; I don't know how to illustrate any more. I'm only an ordinary individual, with not a talent to bless myself with. I've just left my last package for the expressman, washed my hands of paint and charcoal, and shaken off the dust of the studio for the next three weeks."

Bertram's face fell. "Oh, but Miss Wallace," he said; "come now, you are just the artist we need. It's a steamer story which is to appear in September *Scrivener's*, and I thought of those jolly ocean sketch-books that you kept coming over, and have been patting myself on the back ever since!"

"Can't help it, Mr. Linton. I've made a sacred promise not to undertake another thing until I've had a vacation."

"Whom have you promised?" curiously.

"Myself."

"Oh, it's easy enough to break that, then !
Do break it and help me out."

Elizabeth shook her head firmly. "Can't,
indeed !" she repeated, laughing.

"Don't you ever break promises to yourself,
Miss Wallace ?"

"That's just the trouble. I have done it
once too often, and myself has finally discovered the imposture, and refused to be bamboozled any longer ! I must keep this in order to get back in favor with myself, or I'll never be able to break them again !"

Linton had turned and walked with her to the corner of Broadway, where they stood waiting for her cable. "I see," he laughed ; "then I won't tease you any more, for I know that it is a desperate thing to have one's better self lose faith in one."

"But it is n't that at all : it's my worse self that has lost faith in me, and it's only that honesty is the best policy, for my worse self is bad enough to be revengeful, you see. From what I hear you must be on good terms with

your best self just now, Mr. Linton. Your work is very congenial, is n't it?"

Bertram looked serious. "I have signed with a hard taskmaster, but every day I grow more ashamed of not having done it sooner!" He struck the pavement a ringing blow with his cane, and Elizabeth allowed a car to pass her as she said, earnestly :

"*Never regret!* That is Joan Whetmore's dictum, and I think it's the best one in the world for anyone with a conscience."

"I won't, then," Linton replied, with a pleased smile and a sudden squaring of his broad shoulders. "Thank you, for reminding me. Whereabouts on Long Island are you to be, Miss Wallace?"

"Near Good Ground—do you know it?"

"No; is there good sailing?"

"I should say so! That is, in catboats. It's not fashionable enough for yachting or even naphtha-launching!"

"Yachting!" sniffed Linton, contemptuously; "there's not half the joy in yachting,

or slooping, or launching that there is in a catboat. For pure joy, I say, give me a common garden catboat !”

“ So I think,” agreed Elizabeth, laughing ; “ you ’d better come and try one !”

“ I will later, if I may. I suppose there are hostelries of some sort, if I should ‘ fall upon Good Ground ’ for over Sunday ? I sha’n’t be able to spare any other time.”

“ Oh, yes, indeed !” said Elizabeth, smiling with inward applause at the business man into which *blasé* Bertram had developed, “ plenty, if you don’t mind the other boarders, who are deadly. We are to be at a cottage—Mrs. Flett’s. Good-bye. I hope you will come !” she called cordially over her shoulder, as another cable-car stopped at the corner, and she stepped aboard.

Her spirits rose every mile of the way to Good Ground. The fresh, cool air from across the salt marshes blew in at the open car window ; and the town-worn girl drew in long breaths of its briny deliciousness, in the keen

enjoyment of lungs starved with the hot breath of city streets; while she conjured up visions of a catboat, flying before the wind on Great South Bay, that almost maddened her with impatience.

She reached her destination about four o'clock; and establishing herself in an antiquated hack, was driven the three miles to "Flett's," by an open-mouthed, large-eared, tow-headed, taciturn youth, who sat sideways on the front seat, and stared at his passenger in undisguised curiosity; while the neglected horse zigzagged along the road at his own sweet will—a proceeding which greatly enhanced the excitement, as it caused the old vehicle to lurch over the sandy ruts at an alarming rate. Elizabeth fully expected to be deposited by the wayside at any minute, but the sensation was an enjoyable one, and she balanced gaily on the unsteady seat, and carried on her animated, one-sided conversation so amicably with the youthful Jehu, that by the end of the ride she had won his heart completely.

"If yer wants ter drive about any, Dobbin's allers ready," he said, grinning bashfully, and giving vent to the first connected remark he had yet made, as they came in sight of Captain Flett's cottage, the shingled surface of which glistened like silver in the sun, against its background of sapphire bay. "And they won't charge yer much, nuther," he added, generously; "Dobbin's too old and blind ter farm, and right handy fer pleasure drivin'."

"Thank you. I'll send for you, then, some day. Will you come and drive me?"

"Naw!" came the uncompromising refusal. Which, however, fortunately for Elizabeth's self-esteem, he condescended to explain further. "I can't take yer, cos I won't be here. I'm goin' daown Saouth, a piece," he drawled, importantly.

"Indeed?" asked his agreeable fare, thinking of Florida,—“down South at this time of year! How far?"

"Baout fourteen mile."

Mrs. Wallace was as delighted as heart could wish, over the beautiful surprise of Elizabeth's unexpected coming; while Martha wept tears of pure joy over her dear Miss Betty, who had grown "such a beautiful young lady as never was!" Captain Flett stood by, watching the hubbub with kindly, twinkling eyes, and on being presented took Elizabeth's outstretched hand in a large and hairy grasp, saying with unmistakable cordiality in his big, honest voice, "I be blame glad to see ye miss, —me if I ben't!" The unusual emphasis of his welcome rather startled Elizabeth, but as nobody seemed to notice anything amiss, it was with her own inimitable grace of manner that she controlled her inclination to smile, and thanked him very prettily.

Left alone with Elizabeth, Mrs. Wallace could not say enough in praise of the immaculate cottage, her accommodations, and Martha's care and cooking. "You must not mind Captain Flett," she whispered, while Elizabeth was washing her dusty face and hands, and re-

coiling her heavy masses of wind-blown hair in the dainty little pocket of a room, every inch of which shone a polished smile of welcome. "He hardly ever says anything, but when he does, he uses the most extraordinary language, my dear. At first, I was so shocked, and tried to talk to Martha on the subject; but Martha assures me he means nothing at all. It's just a habit he learned at sea, when a boy, and one she can't rid him of, though she has tried every sort of a way,—begging, and scolding, and praying with him. He just says it's no use; she might as well try to 'onlearn him to breathe!' And Martha says she believes him, and has just given up trying, and come to the conclusion that his goodness will make up to the Lord for those awful words which he does not mean at all. And I really believe it will, Elizabeth, for he has the kindest heart in the world, and has been such a loving husband to Martha. So I try not to notice it any more."

It was late to sail that day, and Elizabeth was only too glad to sit down, before long,

to a delicious homey supper, served on the little porch, from which they could look out across the bay, dotted with home-coming sails. Martha waited upon them, her dear, old, round face wreathed in smiles, and stopped at every trip to the kitchen to say to her spouse who sat smoking his pipe by the open door, "*Ain't* she beautiful, Thomas?" At which query, Thomas invariably shut his eyes, removed his pipe, waved it slowly in the air as if officiating with incense, and invoked all the powers of darkness to witness that it was but truth that Martha spoke.

After supper, mother and daughter sat out in the little, old-fashioned garden, while one by one the stars were lighted in the soft sky, and the waters of the bay subsided, whispering, into an evening peace.

Elizabeth talked about Joan. "Isn't she precious, Mother? So true, and loyal, and reliable! Do you think I can ever be grateful enough for her friendship? What a friend she has been to me! Do you realize, Mother,

that I owe everything to Joan? If it had n't been for her, I should have been advertising soap this minute. We owe her everything," she reiterated, earnestly; "the new work, the better pay, the possibility of this vacation—even the color in your blessed, pale cheeks, this blissful night, and the fine old ocean, booming over there beyond the bay!"

"Yes, and our acquaintance with Mr. Linton, and our friendship with Mr. Dodge. I take such an interest in that young man, Betty. I 'm really *fond* of him. I hardly think you appreciate how clever he is, love. He ought to be rich, a man like that. He has so many theories and plans that he can never afford to carry out while he has to work early and late as he does now. Do you know, it has just occurred to me, how nice it would be if Joan were to fancy him, would it not?"

"Very," said Elizabeth, pulling her cape more closely about her—the night air was chill—"And what a dear little wife she would make," she went on hurriedly; "so dainty

and lovable, and altogether sweet and adorable in every way! She would appreciate him too, would n't she? Would enter into his life fully, I mean?"

"Why, yes, Betty, surely! But a man does n't want his wife to be too intrusive. I always felt that with your father, and judged it best to leave him alone when he was very much in earnest. It would have troubled him to have had to stop and explain things to me. He was such a brilliant man, Elizabeth!"

The memory of an afternoon in Naples came vividly to Elizabeth's mind,—an afternoon when her father had spent three patient hours explaining with the most painstaking and loving care the details of some theory of international economics in which he was deeply absorbed, and which she herself had begged to understand better. His face, too, when she had finally grasped his point, and his delight in her comprehensive questions and appreciative interest later.

She reached out her hand and smoothed her

mother's hair tenderly. Poor, poor Mother, what she had missed! It seemed so ineffably sad.

"Oh, who shall render unto us to make us glad,
The things which for and of each other's sake we
might have had!"

"Mother," she said, later, "I would n't mind the work, I would n't mind the worry, I would n't mind the life, if only people would n't always say it was 'so developing.'—'Bitter, but healthful,' like a horrid tonic! I never used to mind taking medicine, do you know, except when you said it was 'so good for me!' It must be because it took away from the heroism in swallowing it I had been so proud of!"

And again: "It *is* developing; that's the worst of it. And so—there's no pleasure in grumbling, and no sense in being a martyr, after all, any more than there was with the medicine. How selfish I am, sweetheart!"

A little later: "Love me, dear! Pretend I'm a little girl again, and don't know any-

thing about painting, except to color the illustrations in the back numbers of magazines, on rainy days up in the old attic. Pretend we are rich again, and don't have to take developing medicine, and—are *all* here together ! ”

Mrs. Wallace tipped the wistful face up, and pushed back the shadowy hair from the shadowy eyes, with a soft, slender hand. “ You are happy, love ? ” she asked, a note of puzzled anxiety in her voice.

The girl nestled her head back on her mother's knee, with a little laugh. “ Perfectly happy, Madre Mia,” she said brightly ; and Mrs. Wallace, serenely content again, rocked lazily in the low hammock which Captain Flett had swung for her between two wind-stunted pines. The pendulum of her gentle thoughts swung as evenly back and forth—Elizabeth here, Elizabeth resting ; the pleasant place, the peaceful night !

Two katydids, hidden in the salt grass, disputed in an amicably monotonous way. Their intermittent voices but emphasized the

stillness. Elizabeth, gratefully conscious of the subduing calm, lapsed into a thoughtless, quiescent reverie, letting her mind vegetate in a delicious languor. So they remained till bedtime.



CHAPTER XII

A TRUCE

“ Yet I will but say what mere friends say
Or only a thought stronger ;
I will hold your hand but so long as all may,
Or so very little longer ! ”

IT was very hot in the city. Calvert's mind played truant from his work, and flew out of the high office window which overlooked the bay. He followed it with his eyes as far as the dim line which meant Long Island ; but it flew still farther, quite out of sight, to a sandy strip of shore, where two little city children raced laughing with the wonderful waves, and a tall, dark-haired girl sat and smiled upon them.

One of the City editors, who had just come back after his vacation, glanced at him as he

passed in with some copy, and stopped to say humanely: "I say, Dodge, you ought to knock off for a week or so. You deserve to be *tanned* for slaving as you do! You're as pale and big-eyed now as possible; and you can't afford to be ill, you know."

Dodge looked up smiling, while a sudden, daring plan sprang full-fledged into his brain. "Thank you, Morris, I don't feel very fit. I believe I'll take your advice. I'm thinking of running down to Long Island for a few days; and as you say, no time like the present."

"Glad of it; *bon voyage!*" And the City editor passed on, whistling unconsciously as he did so, "The Girl I Left behind Me."

Calvert drew out from his pocket a note which bore the evidence of much handling, though dated only ten days previous.

"My dear Mr. Dodge:"—he read again—"I came down to Good Ground yesterday afternoon, and write, as I promised, to let you know that everything is beautifully arranged for the carrying out of our plan for Dan and Biddy.

Mrs. Flett will be delighted to have them, and Mother and I are looking forward very much to their coming. If you will kindly see about putting them in the train at Long Island City, in charge of the conductor, I will arrange to meet them at the station here, and drive them to the house, which is about three miles away. I trust you received safely my collection of East Side sketches, which I expressed you from the studio yesterday morning, and that you will let me know if there is any alteration to be made. We shall be ready for the children just as soon as they can come. I hate to think that anyone is staying in that 'City of Dreadful Night,'—and day—who could possibly be down here by the ocean!

“Very sincerely,

“ELIZABETH WALLACE.”

Quick on the reading, followed the threadbare question,—Had she thought it surly, had it been so, to leave her letter unanswered, and only telegraph his arrangements the night

before he had shipped the children? Naturally, she was entirely ignorant of the fact that he, Calvert Dodge, so accustomed to plying the pen of the ready writer, had wasted a good deal of time, and note-paper, in a vacillating indecision between a reply that said too much and one that said too little. This indecision had finally culminated in a telegram, which solved the difficulty with its necessarily businesslike, impersonal brevity.

He took up the envelope again, drew out a yellow sheet, and read: "Your message received. Will gladly meet children on arrival of 10:30 to-morrow morning. E. Wallace."

That was a whole week ago! Surely, it was most natural, most inevitable, that he should feel a strong desire and curiosity to see how his quondam wards were doing in their new surroundings! Surely it was fitting, that he, as well as Elizabeth, should share in the contemplation of their excitement and happiness over the beautiful, unexpected vacation! Surely—to the winds with sophistry!—surely

it was not strange that he should wish to assure himself that Elizabeth Wallace had forgiven what she had chosen to consider his presumption upon their last interview ; should wish to re-establish himself in her good graces !

He had seen nothing of Linton for over a week. Their offices being at so great a distance apart precluded the possibility of their often lunching together ; and Calvert had fallen, latterly, into the habit of taking his dinner down-town, and using his office in the evenings for some outside work, over which he was busy just at the moment. Now the thought came into his head that he would look Bertram up and tell him of his sudden resolve. But quick on the heels of this impulse trod another. Why see Linton at all, when, in all probability, something about the interview would only tend to confirm his suspicions, serve to prick his ridiculous conscience, and possibly make him give up his trip altogether ? So far, he had only guessed at Linton's interest in Miss Wallace. Should anything happen to


establish it more surely—should Bertram, as indeed was not impossible, take it into his head to confide in him—then he would be shackled indeed. No, he would not see Linton ; he would take this one week as a gift from the gods. He would let himself have seven days of unthinking enjoyment, of nearness to Elizabeth, of happy, reckless comradeship, and bury out of sight his Quixotic scruples on Bertram's account. Just because he suspected Linton's secret, was that any reason why he should deny himself the vacation he wanted and needed ? Great Heavens ! The man was grown up. Let him take care of himself. Just because it was evident that one man was in love with Miss Wallace, was that any reason why no other should see, and talk to, and be friends with her—should spend a harmless, happy week by the ocean in company with her and the children they had both befriended ? He had himself well in hand. No one would suffer for it but himself ; and if he chose to pay for those seven days in a bitterer heartache than he had

yet known, whose business was it but his own?

Noon of the next day, Tuesday, saw him at Good Ground ; and already established in a little square box of a room, papered with fly-specked paper of calico pattern, furnished with a feather-bed, a washstand from which the paint had been washed away, and two cane-seated chairs ; and filled with that peculiar, musty odor which invests summer hostelries of this calibre.

Dodge propped open his two windows (fortunately it was a corner box), with the sticks supplied for that purpose, and left it to air, while he ate a brief luncheon, and then started for Mrs. Flett's cottage. The walk was a long and dusty one, but he covered it in a wonderfully short space of time ; and felt his heart fill at each step with a more exultant sense of boyish irresponsibility and exhilaration.

Arrived at the cottage, he found only Martha, who told him her whole household were over on the beach across the bay.



"How can I get across?" asked Calvert, fretted at the delay.

"Well, now, I don't rightly know—where 'd you come from?" Martha demanded.

"From Good Ground. Why?"

"That's a shame, 'cause you could of got any amount of boats to take you acrost there. There ain't anyone here at this time of day. The captain, he toted 'em all over, right after lunch, and the next house is a right smart ways from here." Seeing Calvert's crestfallen look, she added, with tentative kindness, "If you should feel like rowin', there's the old skiff down to our dock yonder," and she pointed to a flat-bottomed tub, about fifty feet from the house.

"Oh, thank you! You're *very* kind!" cried Dodge, gratefully. "That's what I'll do then." And five minutes later the impatient legs had given way to impatient arms which were propelling him with long, vigorous strokes across the bay.

He beached his boat securely beside a catboat which he attributed rightly to Captain Flett

and his party, and then scrambled over the low, sandy downs, knee-deep in their mane of sun-bleached salt-grass, stiff and coarse as horse-hair. A minute later, the mighty expanse of glittering, restless sea smote his eager eyes, and his heart contracted and then expanded with that undying delight with which old Neptune never fails to thrill his lovers. At the same instant, he caught sight of a little group, about a quarter of a mile down the beach, partly hidden under the shade of a big white umbrella, whose handle had been driven firmly into the sand. Towards this group he made his way, to find it composed of Mrs. Wallace and Biddy who lay curled, a moist and rosy little heap of conquered childhood, sound asleep on the corner of a big plaid shawl which had been spread beneath the umbrella. She did not even blink while Mrs. Wallace greeted Dodge with effusive and very gratifying pleasure. "How charming!" she cried delightedly; "how very nice! I was saying to Elizabeth only the other day, that you really

ought to be getting off for a little rest, and that it would be so nice if you should take it into your head to run down here and see for yourself how fat your protégés are getting. But Elizabeth said she did n't think you would be able to come. I do hope you are going to stay with us, now that you are here? Where are you stopping, and when did you come, and how did you ever find us in this out-of-the-way part of the beach?"

Calvert answered this kindly stream of questions minutely, feeling his lonely heart inundated with a flood of warmest gratitude to this gracious woman who took such a genuine and frank interest in his welfare. Then he asked for Elizabeth.

"Oh, she is over there, helping Dan to build a fort, I believe," indicating a huge rampart of sand, some little distance farther down the beach. "She is the most indomitably energetic creature, and one would think her as much of a child as Biddy and Dan, she enters into their games so heartily. Yes, go over and

surprise her," she ended, noting his involuntary movement. "She will be glad to see you, I know."

Calvert had his doubts. But he rose with alacrity, nevertheless, and made a swift onslaught upon the ramparts, scaling them so noiselessly that he had been standing for fully thirty seconds on the top looking down into the hollow upon the two busy workers, whose faces were turned from him, before Elizabeth saw him.

"Now we are nearly safe!" she was crying gleefully to Dan. "Build it high, Dan! Build it high and strong so that the enemy can never budge it!"

"Yes 'm. Who did yer say was de enemy? Tell us ag'in 'bout all dat, Lady!"

"Why, don't you remember, Dan, the enemy is—*Mr. Dodge!*" she cried, looking up with a glowing face. As she did so and saw him preparing to descend, the sand slipping in shining cascades from beneath his feet, that old, figurative fancy which had assailed her on the after-

noon of their quarrel, flashed into her mind, and the brilliant color ebbed suddenly, while her golden eyes grew dark and wide.

But Dodge would not let himself notice the unflattering change. He had pulled out his white handkerchief and knotted it to his stick. Now he waved the flag of truce aloft, and springing down, clasped the hands which the next instant Elizabeth held out to him cordially, while Dan capered madly about the two in enraptured delight over the surprise.

Then the sand-masons laid aside their tools and they all strolled back to the "mushroom," as Elizabeth had dubbed their great cotton umbrella. Here they woke Biddy, who, sleepily cross at first, subsided instantly into sticky bliss over a package which assured her, better than all they could say, that here indeed was the Santa Claus of that dimly remembered and dun-colored past, before she and Danny had come to this beautiful new world which was nearly all water, and one heavenly round of eating, playing, and sleeping.

Pretty soon she and Dan departed in quest of shells and seaweed to decorate their fort, and Calvert looked after them with laughing, approving eyes.

"Well, you have done wonders!" he exclaimed, honestly. "Who would ever dream that that brace of fat little sandpipers was my pair of small gutter-snipes of two weeks ago!"

"Don't they look well?" agreed Elizabeth, joyfully. "Biddy was always rather plump, and had a good deal of color, even in New York, but she will soon be so fat she can do nothing but roll,—and oh, their appetites, Mr. Dodge! But then I must n't throw stones in that direction. We are all anacondas down here, except Mother, and even she is 'able to sit up and notice things!'"

"I'm sure, Elizabeth, I eat very heartily," insisted Mrs. Wallace, deprecatingly; "and I can really say I have never felt better."

"Indeed you look it," said Dodge, feelingly; "both you and Miss Wallace show nearly as great an improvement as the children!" He

let a long, happy glance rest on Elizabeth as he spoke. She was indeed refreshingly, radiantly bright and fair to look upon ; gowned in a delectably clean crash skirt and a crisp, pink linen shirt-waist, above which her rich face was all aglow from the life-giving sun and air. She had taken off her white sailor hat, and pennons of her soft, dark hair fluttered in the salt breeze, giving her an air of youthful dishevelment which made her look and feel like a girl of sixteen.

She had clasped those shapely, sensitive hands of hers about her knees, and was looking happily out over the water. " I 'd resent that last speech of yours if I were back in the city. Oh ! how I hate even the thought of it ! Don't let's even so much as mention it again ! " she said gaily. " But *here*," she turned to Calvert with dancing, friendly eyes, " here nobody resents anything. Life is too short and beautiful to waste over anything so trivial. You will not be allowed to stay, unless you have come to Arcady in the same charitable state of

mind, prepared to leave every grudge behind you, and renew your youth as Mother and Dan and Biddy and I have done ! Are you willing ? Is that what your flag of truce meant, a few minutes ago ?” She fixed him with a look which seemed to ask, Shall by-gones be by-gones ? And Calvert’s eyes smiled back a satisfying acquiescence in reply.

“ Oh great, wide, wonderful, beautiful world,
With the wonderful water about you curled,”

surely you are a place to be happy in ! Surely it is only when we are happy that we fall into step with your bounding life ! Surely it is only when the heart throbs strong and free that it becomes a wondrous tuning-fork, vibrating in unison with the glad, unanimous chord, which swells to Heaven from the earth beneath.



CHAPTER XIII

REALITIES

“ Flower o’ the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each.”

“ **S**HUT up your sketch-box and be an ordinary mortal for once ! ” urged Calvert. “ Look at the ocean without trying to translate its water-color in terms of oil and canvas. Let those sea-horses out there toss their white manes in the sun without trying to render the effect in brush-marks. Play you’re just an ordinary mortal for once ! See, I’ve dug a hole in the sand for you ; now wrap up your talent and let me bury it deep for this one day.” He held out Biddy’s lunch napkin alluringly as he spoke. “ We’ll dig it up again when we start for home—I promise you ! ”

From the moment when she had looked up at the sand-fort and seen him standing before her—this daring invader of her objective and subjective existence—Elizabeth had determined with a recklessness akin to that which had inspired this trip of Calvert's, to let herself go, and yield, unthinkingly, to the charm of congenial companionship, aided and abetted as it was by all the witchery of setting. For three whole days, they had walked and sailed, talked, romped with the children or been silent, together, in a perfect community of interest, a harmony of enjoyment, which made a past where there had been discord seem very far away and impossible indeed.

Now she shifted mentally to his playful mood with a zest which surprised herself ; and was conscious of a restful relaxation of body and spirit as she closed her sketch-box, folded it in the napkin, and deposited it obediently in the new-made grave, laughing as she did so,—“ That 's what I fully intended to do when I came down here, but this color is such a

temptation ! I'm willing, however, if you are. But in return, you must promise me to think simply, and not worry to translate your thoughts into fit phrases. Words are just as much a false and inadequate medium as colors. We would have to keep absolute silence if you buried your talent !”

“Very well !” replied Calvert, with an oddly keen glance, “agreed ! We'll devote to-day to *realities* then, and forget all artificial conventions and restrictions for a time ?” An underlying intensity broke through the quietness of his voice ; then with a short, excited laugh, he flung himself back on the sunned, sea-scented sand, digging his strong, lithe fingers deep into it ; his face turned from Elizabeth.

The strange effect of her thoughtless words struck sharp on the girl's quick sensitiveness. For a moment, she was aware of a stifled feeling, and putting up her hand she loosened the sailor knot at her throat. How far he was from her, this big man in the rough blue

serge, when he let slip his moorings of work and poverty, and allowed himself to think of "realities!"

His realities were ideals! Strange, that a man with so vivid and rare a spiritual side, could plod on so nobly at his practical, prosaic work, and grow stronger, instead of chafing, under the uncongenial conditions of his surroundings. All the old bitterness was gone; and sitting there, looking at those broad, rough shoulders,—underneath the power of the strong man, appealed to her the remembrance of his eager boyishness, his unworldly enthusiasm. Her heart was filled with a rush of yearning tenderness, and she put up a little, involuntary, heathenish petition to the fates that happiness might come to him in the guise he craved; even though—even though their friendship must be her propitiatory sacrifice!

With a curious substantiation of her unacknowledged thought, Calvert rolled over on one arm and said, looking up at her from un-

der the rim of his soft gray hat: "Do you remember that little thing of Clinton Scolard's, 'If Only the Dreams Abide'?"

Elizabeth sat intensely still. "No, tell it me,"—and the deep music of his voice repeated, slowly,

"If the things of earth must pass
Like the dews upon the grass,
Like the mists that break and run
At the forward sweep of the sun,
I shall be satisfied
If only the dreams abide.

"Nay; I would not be shorn
Of gold from the mines of morn;
I would not be bereft
Of the last blue flower in the cleft,
Of the haze that haunts the hills,
Of the moon that the midnight fills.
Still would I know the grace
On love's uplifted face,
And the slow, sweet joy-dawn there
Under the dusk of her hair.

"I pray thee, spare me, Fate,
The woeful, wearying weight
Of a heart that feels no pain
At the sob of the Autumn rain,

As Having Nothing

And takes no breath of glee
From the organ-surge of the sea—
Of a mind where memory broods
Over songless solitudes :
I shall be satisfied
If only the dreams abide.’ ”

Elizabeth made no comment ; and “ under the dusk of her hair,” her eyelids were drooped absently, hiding depths into which Calvert longed to look.

She was musing how true it was,—what she had just been thinking—that this man’s dreams were his realities ! And Joan—Joan was the centre about which his dreams revolved. Her mind reverted suddenly to Joan’s letters, which had been disquieting, because so very unsatisfactory. Once in a while she would touch upon Elizabeth’s remarks on the subject of Calvert Dodge and his interest in her ; but either so lightly, so fitfully, or with such mock seriousness, that Elizabeth could not make up her mind whether she was really becoming at all interested in him or not. Suppose, suppose that Joan should never care ! Such strange

perversities of fate have been. And Elizabeth's soul again was swept with the ardent wish that all would be well with these two dearest friends of hers.

Calvert spoke.

" 'Contentment is better than riches,' " he quoted grimly ; " the man who wrote that was a fool ! " Then, " To-day is dedicated to realities. Will you go for a sail with me this afternoon, Miss Wallace ? "

For all answer, Elizabeth gripped his sleeve in a tight grasp. " Look ! " she cried. " *Look there !* Oh, Mr. Dodge, I 'm afraid Dan is in trouble ! He is calling, out there in the water ; but I can't hear what he says. Oh, he is *gone !* "

Dodge sprang to his feet. A little way off, Biddy was wading happily, the water rippling about her brown little knees, her skirts tucked up into a bunch behind, which gave her the appearance of a young stork. Out beyond the rope which was Dan's limit, as a wave lowered its crest, Calvert saw a little dark head, which showed an instant, and then sank again. .

Before Elizabeth could think collectedly, she found herself crouching on the sand beside a pair of tan shoes and a blue serge coat, while a tall, shirt-sleeved figure cleared the space between her and the sea in a shorter time than she would have thought possible ; and in another moment had splashed into the water, making towards the place where that tiny dark head had last been. An instant later he, too, had disappeared, and Elizabeth knew that he had dived, and was swimming under water. Mechanically, she reached out her hand, and laid it on the blue coat at her side. The touch of its rough surface reassured her, as if some latent strength from the man had passed into the garment, and still lingered. Her swift terror for Calvert ebbed rapidly. She knew that there was small danger for that strong man ; but—for the little child—would he come too late ! The waves raced and laughed along the shore in a heartless indifference to the commonplace tragedy of the moment, and Biddy's bright little figure waded placidly in

the shoals, unconscious of the whole thing. Elizabeth kept her fingers clasped on the serge sleeve until she saw the two heads emerge from beneath that sparkling surface. Then she drew her hand away, and rising, ran down to the shore to meet them.

When Calvert reached the shallows and began to wade out, she saw that he was carrying the boy, and that the little form hung limp in his strong clasp. "O God!" she prayed, in an inward agony, "don't let him be dead!" But when Calvert reached her she smiled bravely into his face.

"He is overcome," she said; "we will have him all right in a minute!"

Calvert nodded. "Get the flask from my coat-pocket," he said shortly; and kneeling on the sand, he began to chafe the little body with supple, efficient hands.

Elizabeth brought the flask, and then knelt by his side. "Tell me, too," she begged; "let me help!"

Calvert gave some quick directions, which

the girl followed with intuitive precision. After they had been rubbing, it seemed to Elizabeth for hours, she raised her eyes pitifully, and they met Calvert's across the still little figure. He smiled for the first time. "Don't despair, dear,"—and they returned to the monotonous movement.

Suddenly, a cry from Bidly smote on their ears. She had run up behind, unnoticed, to see what this curious game might be that "Misser Dodge and Lady" were playing in the sand. "Oh, why did mine Danny go to sleep in de daytime?" she demanded. "Is yer tryin' ter wake him up? Bidly 'll wake him—Danny!" she called, stooping down and putting her little mouth close to his ear, "Danny, wake up!"

There was no answer; and something in the quiet, unnatural pallor of Danny's freckled face smote her childish heart with fear. Her lip trembled, and she began to whimper. Then before they could stop her, she had flung herself down on top of the wet little figure, and

putting her arms about his neck, "Oh Danny, *Danny!*" she wailed, "*please* talk to Biddy! wake up, Danny!"

The cry of love may have pierced through the mists, for a moment later, Calvert's trained hand detected a slight flutter in the little breast. Crying, "He's all right, he's coming round! Take Biddy away!" he went at the chafing with redoubled energy, and in a few minutes was able to force down enough brandy to produce a slight choking sound, which Elizabeth thought the most welcome she had ever heard.

A little while longer, and all danger was over; and Dan himself, gasping and weak, opened his eyes and looked about him in a dazed way. "Hully Gee!" he said feebly. "Where am I at?"

Dodge smiled. "You had a pretty close shave from drowning, Dan," he said; "but you're all right now, I guess. Hello, sit up there, how goes it? Head pretty dizzy, eh?"

Dan turned troubled eyes upon the sea, their anxious expression giving place to a blissful

content. "Yes sir—but de *ocean*'s here, ain't it? I dreamt as I swallered it, last t'ing I remember," he said confusedly. "Why, you're all wet, Mr. Dodge," he volunteered, a few minutes later; "I bet yer wot, yer come arter me—*wid yer clothes on!*" he added, in an awestruck voice.

Calvert admitted the impeachment, and Dan's head drooped shamedly. "Tank yer, sir," he said slowly, and in a low voice; "I was a bad un to come arter. Lady said not to go beyant the rope, but I did. Did yer know it?—Would yer 'a' come arter me ef yer'd 'a' knowed it?"

"Why, Dan, of course!" cried Elizabeth, laying her soft hand on the boy's wet curls. "Dear little boy, we're not angry a bit. You see yourself, now, why I told you not to go out farther than the rope; and it was such a hard lesson to learn that I know you'll never forget it!"

Dan's Irish mouth broadened into his contagious, Irish grin. "Well, ef you ain't a couple o' toffs!" was all he said, in his weak little voice;

but both Elizabeth and Calvert knew that, if they lived to a green old age, they would never receive a higher tribute to their magnanimity than that.

Calvert bundled Dan warmly in his coat ; and then, stooping, picked him up and strode away with him across the sands, at a half trot, in order to get up his own circulation. Elizabeth caught Biddy's hand, and followed with a gay heart. How blue the sky was—"a turquoise scroll !" How white the gleaming sands ! How friendly the erstwhile hostile water !—"Laugh, and the world laughs with you !"—how true it is !

At the door of the cottage Calvert paused to say, "I'm just going to slip over and put on some dry togs. It's getting late. By the time you've had lunch, I'll be back to claim that promised sail."

Elizabeth failed to remember that she had made any promise ; but she only said warmly. "All right, I'll be ready. Be sure you change everything—and stop for some hot lunch yourself !"



CHAPTER XIV

VOLUNTARY EXILE

“ Break the string ; fold music’s wing ;
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing ! ”

GREAT SOUTH BAY lay, a sheet of copper, under the last rays of the setting sun. A crisp breeze which had been coquetting with the water all the afternoon had now ficklely deserted ; and the dancing, laughing expanse of waves had settled down demurely, blushing into placid resignation over their former frivolity. All about the horizon, sails hung motionless, like brooding seabirds. Calvert Dodge had been tacking cleverly and coaxingly for the past ten minutes, luring the bored breeze into his canvas with every art known to a good sailor ; while Elizabeth applauded his success incit-

ingly, till their snail-like progress became as exciting as a race. Suddenly the keel of the boat raised itself slightly with a soft, sliding decision. Immediately, the almost imperceptible motion ceased, and the faintly bellying sail drooped in abject surrender.

"Oh!" gasped Elizabeth, with a soft, downward inflection, "we are aground."

Calvert looked up at her like a mischievous schoolboy. "It looks that way," he agreed, smiling. "Please, are you going to stand me up in a row, 'Lady'? It is n't my fault that we are prisoners at the Bar, is it?"

"Put out your oar and poke!" commanded Elizabeth, ignoring with obvious scorn this feeble joke.

After ten minutes of silent and strenuous obedience, Dodge dropped, hot and perspiring, on the front of the boat. "Whew!" he said, and then prepared, meekly, to continue his exertions.

"Oh, *rest!*" laughed the girl, ruefully; "it's perfectly useless, for if you could push off,

there's not a breath of wind left to take us home. It's no use trying any more till it blows up again at least."

"I don't believe we can get off till the tide rises," cheerfully remarked Calvert, who had resumed his seat with alacrity.

"Oh, dear! and we are at least five miles from home now! and the tide does n't rise till after eight to-night! I was afraid we would be late anyhow; and now—what time is it?" demanded Elizabeth.

Calvert put his hands in his pockets and leaned his head back against the mast, while a reckless light shot his gray eyes. "I'm not going to look," he said, with a hint of masterfulness in his tone. "It won't hasten matters one bit; and you're not to worry over the time. We are not to blame that this has happened, and we can't help it. We pledged ourselves to give up to-day to realities, and Fate has taken us at our word. It would be an absurd dereliction to consult a watch, which is, above all things, the most arbitrary and me-

chanical contrivance man ever imposed upon humanity. We will tell time by the real clocks of Nature. There's the sun!" And he waved a genial hand towards the red-hot orb just sinking behind the distant shore-line.

"Yes, and your clock is running down!" said Elizabeth mutinously; but with a treacherous sense of acquiescence, that was beginning to wrap her around, and unite her to the universal calm.

"Well—then here comes the moon as substitute!" said Calvert, pointing to the dark amethyst streak of sea to the east, above which a faint silvery rim of full moon was just showing. "Could you ask a more perfect example of Nature's economy in demand and supply?"

Elizabeth said nothing. Her realization of the inevitable held her convincingly. After all, why not make the most of it, and enjoy the wonderful evening glamour ungrudgingly, since, as her companion had said, they could not better matters? She looked over towards the Shinnecock Hills opposite which they were

becalmed. "Does n't it look like one of Châse's pictures that has got religion from Corot?" she said, with a smile that told Calvert she was resigned to the situation. "Why is it," she went on, as he laughed companionably, "that we never are content to say that a thing is beautiful of its kind and leave it, but must always be comparing it with something else? When we see a wonderful sunset painted, we say, 'how like nature!' and then, poor, narrow things, we must needs exclaim over the actual thing, that it is 'beautiful as a picture!'"

"That's very true, I think. And the more far-fetched the comparison, the better pleased we are. This morning, on the beach, I saw an old tree washed up, and immediately approved of myself because its skeleton branches reminded me of a wrecked ship with gaping, sun-bleached ribs!"

"Well, I don't care if it is foolish," said Elizabeth, decidedly; "I would not barter my imagination for anything in the world. To be sure, it hinders me and plays me false at times,

but weighed in the balance with the help and enjoyment it has given me, that is nothing. The other day, I had been shopping in the city. Such a hot, dusty, deadly, prosaic morning! As I walked home up the baking street, past those eyeless rows of empty houses boarded from the dust,—houses whose happy souls had deserted for green fields and pastures new,—I felt just as dingy and sordid and hopelessly left behind as the scraps of paper that the hot wind was blowing up and down in the neglected street. Then, suddenly, I came to a corner house. The whole side was covered with the coolest, freshest, glossiest green ivy! The breeze was blowing it, shaking it in big waves; and the fancy came into my head that it was a great, green tapestry, behind whose majestic swaying all sorts of fascinating things were hidden. And, do you know, that one, small, insignificant thought kept me happy all the rest of the day!”

Calvert, who had listened comprehendingly, nodded his head with an acquiescent, apprecia-

tive smile. "I understand. The shadows of branches, flung by an electric light, have given me the same out-of-proportion delight, time and again. I sometimes think it is the little things that give the greatest pleasure. It seems contradictory, but I imagine there is a reason for it."

Elizabeth leaned forward eagerly. "Oh, have you noticed that too?" she said; "what is it?"

"Perhaps, after all, we make the mistake in calling them little," said Calvert slowly, feeling for his thought in a way that showed its expression was new to him. "I am tempted to wonder if a thing is ever little when it rouses an intense feeling in our hearts? It is often these little things, or rather, our sudden realization of the beauty with which they are so big, that lifts, for a moment, the curtain, and shows us the abstract quality of beauty, with a keenness of vision which something so great in itself as to overshadow its attributes, fails to do. It does not strike us, I think, as anything to be wondered at, that beauty or power should

be expended on a thing so great as to be worthy of expense; but when we find it lavished on some trivial detail of life or nature, we are upborne by the strength and reality and abundance of the attribute, the abstract quality itself. You understand what I mean, I know, even if I do express myself so poorly."

"Indeed I do see," said Elizabeth, responsively, who had in fact seen his thought as a whole long before he had unfolded it.

Watching the moon rise over the sea, silence fell on them like a mantle, woven of the slowly enveloping dusk. Long time they sat so, motionless and entranced, the crowding thoughts that had been uttering themselves all the afternoon in a quick, inspiring interchange of speech, hushed to a sensation of common appreciation of the peaceful beauty around them, the beautiful peace within them. Gradually, the shore, with its dotted homes and hints of alien life, withdrew into obscurity, and then twinkled into lights that seemed no more earthly or disturbing than the stars.

A little later, Calvert stooped quietly and drew out his mandolin-case, which Elizabeth had seen him put into the boat when they started. Still, without speaking, he began to play, very softly, a sad, little minor melody, exquisite in its simple and haunting pathos. The mandolin, with its indelible association with Italy, and the two dear years there, had a personal and very vital quality for Elizabeth. The quivering sweetness of the knife-like notes seemed to insinuate itself through her breast, and she felt as if her very heart-strings were vibrating in painfully sweet unison. Suddenly, the melody changed to a dreamily happy key ; and Elizabeth became aware that he was putting the words he had quoted that morning to music :

“ If the things of earth must pass
Like the dew upon the grass,
Like the mists that break and run
At the forward sweep of the sun,
I shall be satisfied,
If only the dreams abide.

.

“Still would I know the grace
On Love’s uplifted face,
And the slow, sweet joy-dawn there,
Under the dusk of her hair.”

Elizabeth moved restlessly, and leaned forward, speaking in a voice that, in its attempt to hide the feeling Calvert’s music had roused, sounded like a discord to them both. “Look at the moon’s reflection,” she said, lightly; “a while ago there was only one. Now it looks as if someone were juggling golden balls. That means the water has begun to rock, and the breeze is coming.”

Even as she spoke, a cold, little wind touched them. Both felt its chilly fingers at the same moment; and the girl’s heart shrank into itself with a frightened memory of her softened mood. “Now it looks like golden hieroglyphics!” she said, with a nervous little laugh that only sounded careless. Without a word, Calvert sprang up and began to attend to the sail, which filled generously with the growing breeze. They were away instantly. For with-

out the realization of either, the tide had risen and drifted them across the bar some time before. In a few minutes the wind began to blow strong and fresh; and their increasing speed exhilarated Elizabeth, as swift sailing never failed to do. "See!" she cried, with a childlike abandon, trailing her fingers in the glittering water; "now the reflection is pulled out to long, shining, Chinese lanterns. Pretty soon, it will change to the pebbly path that leads to 'the garden behind the moon!' There! I told you. Now doesn't it look like golden pebbles?"

"Yes, what a pity anything so beautiful should be all moonshine!" said Calvert, with a sort of curt bitterness.

"Oh, you are turning traitor to your pet theories!" mocked Elizabeth lightly. "'The moon that the midnight fills' is one of the dreams that satisfy, you know."

"I'll be hanged if it does!" muttered Calvert savagely, pulling at the ropes, and bringing the boom over with a suddenness that

caused Elizabeth to duck quickly and utter a little exclamation of excitement.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" Calvert cried, contritely. "What a stupid brute I was! That might have hurt you. Are you sure it did n't touch you?" The warm, friendly concern in his voice reassured Elizabeth, who had been conscious of some strain during the last few minutes. How absurd of her to think wild thoughts! This man was her good friend and companion. She had been a fool fifteen minutes ago. She flung her head back proudly, with a gratifying reassumption of the old independence. "Ah, how I love the wind and the sea!" she exclaimed enthusiastically. "Whenever I get on the water I think of what Brown-ing said: do you remember?—

"My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll,
Freshening and fluttering in the wind."

Calvert started uncontrollably. Strange, some lines of that very poem had been warm in his brain a few minutes since!—

“ I and my mistress side by side,
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night ? ”

“ Do you know what poem that is ? ” he demanded uncertainly, breathlessly.

The remembrance had just struck Elizabeth, and she could have bitten out her tongue to recall her words. Her mind fluttered helplessly for some utterly foreign topic on which to cling, and she grasped eagerly at the first thought that came, unconscious of how suggestive it might sound to Calvert.

“ Oh, I heard from Mr. Linton to-day ! ” she said quickly ; “ he is coming down to spend Sunday. I knew you would be glad to hear it.”

Calvert shrank back as if from a blow. “ Why did n't you tell me before ? ” he said.

“ Why, why—I don't know, I'm sure. I meant to tell you as soon as I saw you. I found the letter when we reached home this

morning. Jimmie had brought it. Something must have put it out of my head," she added, helplessly, with a sense, somehow, of wrong—to whom—to what—she could not understand. She had certainly meant to speak of it, and at once. A shamed surprise welled in her heart as she recognized that she had not given the subject another thought from the moment that Calvert came for her.

They had nearly reached home and Dodge was again occupied with the sail, as he prepared to bring up to the little wharf.

"I'm sorry I shall not see him," he said stiffly; "I'm going back to-morrow."

"Are you? I thought you were going to stay a week. That will not be up till Tuesday, will it? I thought we would all have such a nice time together!" Elizabeth's tone was eager, in spite of herself.

"I can't. I'm sorry, but it happens I got a letter, too, when I reached the hotel. It was from my chief, and it seems they want me to run over to England, on business."

"To England!" exclaimed Elizabeth, dully. "It's very sudden, isn't it? I did n't know you were thinking of such a thing."

"I was n't. Life is sudden, at times. Man proposes, and—a paper disposes! I suppose I could decline to go, but under the circumstances, I think I shall accept."

They had drawn in against the wharf, and with a short laugh, Dodge sprang out and held the boat fast with one hand, reaching the other to Elizabeth. She did not notice it, however, but scrambled out by herself and then moved slowly along the dock while he moored the boat securely.

"Under the circumstances!"—His words repeated themselves in her mind, and then she raised her head with a swift comprehension. "Of course you must not miss the opportunity," she said blithely, when, having made all fast, Calvert joined her. "That would be foolish indeed. And while you are over there you must manage to kill two birds with one stone and see Joan. I will give you a note to her."

She knows about you and will be so glad to have you call."

"Joan?" repeated Dodge, vaguely.

"Yes, Joan—Miss Whetmore, the Wisp, your ideal, you know," said Elizabeth, laughing brightly; "I do think this is the most interesting development of all, after your having missed her so many times here. It is what Mr. Stockton would call an 'assisted destiny'!"

Calvert echoed her laugh a bit harshly. "To be sure, my ideal! My ideal is a Will o' the Wisp! Yes, I shall take pleasure in looking Miss Whetmore up."

As he spoke, they came in sight of the cottage, and one of two dark figures sitting on the tiny porch rose with a low exclamation of relief and stepped out into the moonlight to greet them. "Oh, Elizabeth, love, Martha and I have been so worried about you! What kept you so late?"

Elizabeth drew her mother's arm through her own and moved close to her side as the

three walked up the little path. "We were becalmed, Madre," she said, brightly; "and stuck on a sand-bar, besides. Everything seemed to conspire to make us late to-night."

"Ah, Captain Flett said it was the calm, but I was too anxious to believe him;" and Mrs. Wallace gave a contented sigh. "Martha kept your supper for you, dear. You must be as hungry as bears, both of you! Won't you come in and have something to eat, too, Mr. Dodge? I am sure there is plenty, for Mrs. Flett is a most ample provider."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wallace. I'm afraid I can't. I am starting for the city the first thing in the morning, and I must throw my things together to-night. I'm off for a long trip," he added.

"Mr. Dodge is going abroad," put in Elizabeth, quickly. "He sails for England this week and will probably see Joan over there. Isn't that nice? I have promised to write him a note for her. If you'll wait just a minute I'll do it now," she ended, and ran into the

house leaving Calvert to tell Mrs. Wallace, who was greatly interested, as much as he himself knew of his sudden plans.

In a few minutes Elizabeth came out again with the note in her hand, and Calvert rose at once to make his adieus. After he had said good-by to Mrs. Wallace he turned to Elizabeth and took her hand in a close grasp. It felt cold and unresponsive to him, and when the girl, raising her eyes with some commonplace little remark, met the earnest, inscrutable expression in his, he felt a motion of withdrawal in her fingers, and loosening them abruptly, he turned away and walked quickly down the little path.

Rather blindly however. For just beyond the gate he ran full tilt into Captain Flett who was ruminating peacefully over his corn-cob pipe, which was indeed as inseparable from him as a cud. The shock knocked the pipe to the ground, and Dodge fumbled for it with an unsteady hand, and handed it back with an incoherent apology for his "awkwardness."

Captain Flett dusted off his cherished possession with deliberate fingers. "'T is n't that ye *be* so awkward," he said, weighing the matter with reflective consideration, "as that ye *act* so d—— awkward!" But when he finished and looked up, Dodge was already a rapidly diminishing figure on the lonely road.

As he had so suddenly planned, Calvert took the early train into the city and went straight to the office to get further details about the unexpected commission which he had been asked to undertake. He found himself agreeing to start at once—"the sooner the better"—by a steamer that sailed that very afternoon, in fact; and, the interview concluded, he was just hurrying out of the building on his way up-town, when he almost ran into Bertram Linton, hurrying in the opposite direction.

"Hello, Dodge!" cried Bertram. "Where are you off to so fast? I'm going down to Good Ground this afternoon, and raced down here to see if I could n't get you to come with me. Miss Wallace is down there with her

mother, you know. Don't you want to come?"

The friendliness of his tone caused Calvert to wince inwardly. How utterly trustful and unconscious Bertram was! Dodge turned away his eyes from his friend's eager ones as he said, shortly: "Sorry I can't, Linton, but I've been called home on business, and am off to the other side to-night."

"The other side! Well, that is a departure. What is it?"

"Oh, some work in connection with the Sunday issues,—a series of letters from the British Isles. I'm expected to tag the tourists, I believe. They manage these things better out West. There, the foreign correspondent sits at home and writes letters from all over the globe without moving from his desk! But speaking of tourists, Miss Wallace gave me a letter to the Whetmores, and I mean to try to look them up. I've been down to Good Ground myself for a few days, and only came up this morning. Miss Wallace told me you

were coming," he ended, striving to make his voice sound easy and natural.

"Oh, did she? Yes,—yes, of course." Linton's tone sounded so *distract* that Calvert glanced at him quickly, and saw that he seemed to be struggling with a discomfort equal to his own.

With an inward laugh at the absurdity of what he divined to be the cause, Dodge said, deprecatingly, in obedience to a frank impulse: "Bertie—I—I rather think I've guessed who 'the all-powerful drop' is! I hope you don't mind?"

Linton's face brightened visibly. "Mind?" he said, heartily. "No, I believe I'm glad of it, Calvert. You won't try to cut me out now, you see!" he added, with such innocent light-heartedness that Dodge felt a sort of contempt for his friend's blindness creep into his voice as he answered, with a rather dry smile. "No, I sha'n't try to cut you out, Bertram. Good-by! I must be off, for there's a world of things for me to see after, before three o'clock!"



CHAPTER XV

“WANTING IS—WHAT?”

“Flower o’ the broom,
Take away love and our earth is a tomb!”

“SLOWLY, slowly, slowly the days succeeded each other.” Bertram Linton came and went several times. The ripening earth rolled on to its mellow harvest. Elizabeth lengthened her vacation from three to six weeks, and the end of August found her still within sound of “the organ surge of the sea.” All her old ambition for work seemed to have left her; and while the children grew heavier and browner with each succeeding week, Elizabeth’s face began slowly to show more plainly the pure modelling of chin and cheek and brow. Happy little orphans!—hardly

less happy in that their poor old grandmother had solved the problem of their returning to the city by dying in the middle of August. It had given Elizabeth a sharp pang to think of the old woman's lonely end in that heat-infested, swarming tenement. All efforts to induce her to join the children had proved of no avail, however,—Mrs. Mulcahey strenuously refusing to be “shmothered in the counthry” to the last; so that the girl felt it was foolish to blame herself in the least. Dan had looked sober for nearly a whole day, when “Lady” had gently told him the news; but Biddy paid not even a half-hour's tribute of regret to the “Granny” whose image had already grown faint through time and separation.

At the end of August, there came a long letter from Joan, in which she spoke of having received a call from Calvert Dodge, and of several subsequent meetings. “We are all delighted with him,” she wrote. “You gave him very stinted praise, I think, Elizabeth. He was with us for nearly a week in Wales,

and was everything that is considerate and interesting. I think he is one of the rare Sir Philip Sydney types, with a dash of modern charm and culture thrown in. We made some memorably delightful trips to those unpronounceably quaint little places, which I think he was writing up. Then we came on to Scotland, and he stayed in Cornwall. We may see him again later, as he intends running up to Scotland some time before he goes back. But as we have decided to sail on the tenth of September, I fear our next meeting will have to wait until we are all back in ‘little old New York’ once more. Elizabeth—you ‘sweeter woman ne’er drew breath,’—I am so impatient to see your blessed face again! I want to have a long whisper in your ear. Letters are such formal ways of telling things, that one’s heart somehow shrinks from writing of what is nearest to it. But, in order that you may not ever feel that you are not always my first thought in everything that comes, I want to commit to this unsympathetic paper that I am

your very loving, and your very happy little Joan."

Elizabeth thought on this letter for a day and a night. The next morning, she said to Mrs. Wallace : "Mother, I have been criminally lazy and good for nothing ! But I know the long rest has done us both good, and you have stored up roses enough to last your dear old cheeks all winter. It's high time to get back to work ; and last night I dreamed all the sketches in my studio came out of their portfolios and held an indignation meeting over my lack of ambition. It's a fearful warning. I have forgotten how to hold a paint-brush or a piece of charcoal. But I must waste no more time in going home and learning how all over again. Mr. Linton wrote me last week about a sea story they want me to illustrate for *Scrivener's* so much, that they have kept it over a whole month. Think of it ! Can you be ready to go to-morrow, dear ?"

"Of course I can, Betty," promptly answered Mrs. Wallace, who had been privately mar-

velling at her energetic daughter's continued inaction. “But I am afraid you have n't gained as much as I, love. I think you are even looking thinner,” and she scanned the fair face anxiously, till it flushed back a denial.

“Nonsense, Sweetheart, this tan hides my color! I'm brown as a berry, you see. I've been bathing too much perhaps, and enjoying myself too vigorously, to grow very fat. The chicks are so young that it's hard for an old body like me to keep up with them!”

“Bless their hearts, how well they look!” remarked Martha, contentedly. She had been washing dishes, and listening shamelessly; and now came out on the porch wiping her wholesome, red arms of the last clinging drops of soap-suds. “It just makes me feel bad to think of you and Mrs. Wallace leaving, dearie! But there, I can't hope to hold ye always, and you've promised to come to me next summer. I will say as the thought of them two children sort of makes up for—all sorts of things to Thomas and me!”

And so, the next day, there was a tearful parting at the little shingled cottage. As they drove off, Elizabeth's last view of the doorway framed a lugubrious picture of Danny, kneading both freckled fists into a face which was decorated with alternating patches of tan, and white spots from which the skin had peeled away ; of Biddy, standing in open-faced, frank, feminine surrender to the tears which ran in rivulets over her plump, red cheeks ; and of Martha, vacillating between spasmodic handkerchief wavings to her departing guests, and the dealing of comforting pats and soothing words to her two woebegone adoptions ; while Captain Flett swore dimly and regretfully in the background.

Then began a season of breathless occupation. Elizabeth flung herself back into her work with a fire and concentration that was productive of some of the best she had ever done. During those days, since their return, she had seen a good deal of Bertram Linton, and had found him so restlessly moody and

capricious upon occasions, so curiously unlike his old, imperturbable self, that for the first time a tiny suspicion had forced itself into her mind, only to be out-thrust again with indignation. His summer of close application had told on him, that was all;—and yet, in regard to his work, he seemed so exactly the right man in the right place, that she could hardly reconcile the change in him on this hypothesis. Mrs. Wallace added innocently to her secret perturbation by suddenly remarking, at the end of an evening which Bertram had spent in their little apartment: “Mark my words, Elizabeth, that young man is in love! If ever I saw the symptoms, he has them. Believe me, I don’t like to be premature, but you know, Elizabeth, you never will open your eyes to this sort of thing; and I must warn you that if you don’t want to have trouble with him, you really ought not to encourage his coming so often.”

Of course Elizabeth scoffed at this open suggestion, with the same scorn with which

she had treated her own half-formulated suspicion ; but her manner changed imperceptibly, and became so lucidly friendly, that no man living could have mistaken its utter indifference to any warmer feeling. Instead of discouraging him, however, it seemed to have the exactly opposite effect. Bertram only redoubled his visits ; and when Elizabeth spoke of going to meet Joan, whose steamer would be due in a few days, he suggested that he would come and go with her.

So it happened that as the great vessel swung slowly and ponderously into her moorings, at the uncomfortable hour of seven o'clock A.M., the first things that a very Parisian little light-haired maiden in the bow spied with her eager field-glass, were the two figures of Elizabeth Wallace and Bertram Linton, standing together on the extreme end of the wharf, and waving frantically ; while their roving eyes wandered searchingly over the conglomerate mass of returning voyagers.

Joan stood a-tiptoe on one of the ventilators, and catching up her blue parasol, she opened and shook it wildly. Then having attracted their attention at last, beamed brightly down at them, through a mist of happy, homecoming tears, which enveloped her friends in a rainbow haze, and made the solid earth reel as giddily as the erstwhile struggling ship. She came down the gangplank one bewildering mixture of smiles and blushes; and in her blue eyes Elizabeth fancied she could clearly detect a tender shine, which was the one thing needed to make them perfectly beautiful.

Then came the bother and delay of the customs, which lasted so long that Elizabeth was forced to tear herself away to an unfinished illustration which was due that very afternoon. She accordingly departed, leaving Bertram doing his best to hurry matters, and make the period of waiting agreeable to Mrs. Whetmore, who exclaimed as impatiently every time, over the inexcusable slowness of the officials, as if she had not experienced the same inconven-

ience, annually, for more years than she might care to number.

All that day Elizabeth worked feverishly ; trying to be only glad of dear little Joan's wonderful, happy eyes. With her usual anxiety to know the worst and have it over with, she longed ardently to fly at once to Joan and hear whatever she had to tell. This feeling was warred upon by another—the wish of a wounded, live thing to creep away and suffer alone, hiding its hurt from all eyes ; above all, from those shining eyes, which Elizabeth felt had caught their reflection from two earnest gray ones, whose every expression was known to her own heart with a painful intimacy. In the struggle between these two selves, two days went by, with the self-alleged excuse of models and pressing work, which indeed occupied her time completely.

But Joan did not intend to let work, or anything else, stand in the way of her long-promised talk with this, her very best friend. On the morning of the third day, just as Elizabeth

was dismissing her model at the noon hour, she appeared at the studio-door dimpling into smiles of rosy pleasure.

“You *fraud!*” she said; “I waited all day yesterday, and all this livelong morning, afraid I’d miss you by coming down here. Are n’t you ashamed of yourself for not coming to see me—after all these months I’ve been away, Beth?”

“I could n’t, Joan—I’ve been so busy—there were models, you see—” began Elizabeth, lamely, and thoroughly ashamed of herself that she could not feel the unselfish gladness she craved over Joan’s suspected and very evident happiness.

“Never mind. I’ll forgive you, lambkin. Let me have a good hug, my best-beloved friend. There! I did n’t half get at you on the wharf the other day. It’s so fine to know you are busy with this fascinating work. Mr. Dodge told us how wonderfully you have been getting along. He admires your work so much—and Bertram Linton too.”

The bright flag of color in her face as she spoke, was a telltale signal to Elizabeth, on the lookout for such revelations. "Let me see what you're doing," she added, turning to the easel with the quick, restless motion of a bird; and exclaiming over the picture upon it with an eagerness that very plainly masked a burning desire to talk of something else, and a hesitancy about beginning. Elizabeth felt her heart swell with the old feeling of tender love and admiration for the exquisite little thing, so full of radiant life and affection. She reached an arm suddenly about Joan and drew her down on the old studio couch beside her, saying, "You can look at all those later. They will wait. But I can't, dear, to hear what you have to tell me. Something happy, I know from your letter—what is it, Joan?"

The girl wrenched herself free, and sat erect with flushed cheeks, and a smile just quivering on her lips; while the light of hidden laughter lurked in her blue eyes. "Never mind about that!" she said quickly, "First, I must tell

you some news. Mr. Linton told me of a brand-new engagement the other day—guess whose?”

Elizabeth shook her head smiling. “I can’t imagine ; I’m a regular hermit, nowadays.”

“His own!” Joan paused gleefully, to watch the unmixed and unaffected amazement in Elizabeth’s face.

“Mr. Linton engaged! To whom?”

“To *me*!” And with an inarticulate sound, halfway between a sob and a laugh, the excited girl flung herself back into her friend’s arms, and buried her face on Elizabeth’s shoulder.

So held, she could not see the changes that flashed, one after the other, over Elizabeth’s face.

“Joan!” she said sharply, “what did you say? Did I hear straight? Tell me, are you engaged to Bertram Linton?” And in her eagerness she fairly shook the little figure in her arms, vigorously.

Joan sat up again with dancing eyes. “It’s

the truth, dear; and oh, Beth, I'm *such* a happy girl!"

Elizabeth took the tone of an inquisitor: "How long has this been going on?" she demanded.

"Oh, ever so long," admitted Joan, with a delicious flush,—"*ages!* You see, he—cared long, long ago; and I—well, to tell the truth, Elizabeth, I have cared longer than I really knew, and far longer than Bertram will ever suspect!"

"What do you mean by 'long'? Did you 'care' when we had our talk together that day, after the posing, you little hypocrite!"

"Oh, Beth, dear, I'm afraid I did, even then. But you were so glorious that afternoon, I didn't dare to lay bare my poor little heart that was so racked with questionings; I felt it would seem pitifully small and unworthy the name of love to a girl with an ideal like yours."

"Oh, hush, Joan! Don't talk like that!"

"But I have been growing surer and surer every minute, Beth. And now, I'm proud to

tell it to all the world! Bertram begged me so hard to be engaged before I left home; but I would n't—not till I was perfectly certain that I had something great and fine enough to give him in exchange for his big, loving heart; till I was sure, without the shadow of a doubt, that I was worthy of the happiness that was tempting me so.”

Elizabeth held her close for all answer, and she went on, earnestly: “Is n't it strange, Elizabeth? We both feel the same way about it. In spite of all I can do, he just keeps on saying he will never deserve it. And do you know, that is what started him to working so desperately this summer. He says he felt he must do, must be, something; and that he had the most unconquerable wish to work for me ‘with the sweat of his brow’ like any day-laborer! We have the most delicious plan, Beth,—to live entirely on Bertram’s salary, on what he earns, like any other ordinary beginners, and spend our money for all sorts of interesting, outside things; and try to do all

the good in the world we can with it. Don't you think it will be a beautiful life, Beth?"

"Indeed I do! Dear little Joan, I think you have solved your old problem of economics perfectly!"

"What is that? Oh—the rich-and-poor theory, you mean! Well, it's still my pet theory. How absurd it is that I should be upsetting it in this fashion! But—circumstances alter cases, you know. When you wrote me about his going to work that way, I felt that I loved him so much, I could hardly wait to get home and tell him. Poor boy! I'm afraid he's been very miserable. But then, I was too!"

"But surely, surely, you don't mean to say you did n't hear from him all summer? Didn't even let him write to you?"

"Not a line! It had to be a perfect test, you see. It was awfully hard, though. But we've stood it, and now I'm going to make it up to him for the rest of my life!"

"Well, Joan, you *are* the most sensible little

woman that ever lived ! I always said so. But how could you do it ? That explains, then !—” And Elizabeth made a little face of comical ruefulness.

“Explains what ?”

“Nothing. Only the way he behaved,—like the most restless and uneasy and in-love mortal that ever lived.”

Joan laughed, well pleased. “He says he could never have borne it, but for you ; and that he thinks you must have loathed the sight of him just at the last, when he hung about in the hope of hearing when I was coming home. You were his only means of finding out, and he says he was bound to be the first thing I saw when I landed—just to remind me *at once* of his existence ! As if I had thought of anything else for a single minute, all summer long !” she confessed, with a charming candor.

Elizabeth caught her hands lovingly. “Joan, he is all that is fine ! I like him so much, and I am sure you two will be as happy as you deserve to be.”

"Everyone likes him," purred Joan, with a dignified ownership that sat quaintly, yet very naturally, on her small self. "Your friend, Mr. Dodge, too, is devoted to him, Elizabeth. It warmed my heart to hear how he talked about him. Mother and I enjoyed Mr. Dodge so. I must know him better. Bertram says he is very knowable ; but I can hardly believe it, he seems so grave and reserved most of the time."

Elizabeth thought swiftly of Calvert Dodge. That was such an odd way to describe the earnestness and enthusiasm she knew the man to be brimful of—but for only a moment. Later, those other thoughts clamoring at the back of her brain would be let in. This was Joan's hour.

"Well, I am most successfully surprised !" she admitted frankly. "I never once dreamed of such a thing ; and from your letters, I had even fancied you were growing interested in this same author of the 'Wisp.' It would have made a pretty story !" she added, trying so hard

to speak carelessly, that she completely deceived Joan, who had been having suspicions on her own account, but had been far too sensible to divulge them, except to Bertram, who had encouraged them considerably.

“*Beth!*” she said reprovingly, “I wrote all that nonsense for fun, thinking you would take it in the same spirit, and—perhaps too—as a sort of wee, extra blind to the real state of things. You surely did n’t suppose I would be goose enough to fall in love with, or even get really interested in, a man I had never seen?”

“Well, it was absurd,” agreed Elizabeth, laughing, and with a vivid realization of how absurd it had actually been. As she had said before, Joan always brought up Elizabeth’s practical side, and made her see things through the clear glasses of her own uncommon sense.

The more she thought of it all in the light of this great news, and the more she reviewed the facts of the past summer, the more convinced she grew that she had been weaving them all into a tangled web of fancies that

was as unreal as it was ridiculous. Suppositions that had seemed natural to her before, in this new light showed themselves to be distorted and exaggerated. Little details which had seemed so fraught with meaning lost their former significance, and began to take on a new one which, in spite of herself, deluged Elizabeth's heart with a warmth that crept upward and colored her face till it glowed anew with the old rich brilliancy. To herself, all alone, she admitted the security that before long he would return, and a hope that the old and inexpressibly dear companionship would be renewed.

But as weeks succeeded weeks, and they heard nothing of the absent traveller, the old demons of doubt and untrustworthy imagination went to work again ; and Elizabeth returned slowly to her former theory. It was as she had fancied, although people like Joan, happy, sensible people, could never understand such a thing. She herself could appreciate just how such a curious coincidence would

take tyrannous hold of a man like Calvert Dodge ; and how, caring for his ideal as he must, having once seen Joan, as he thought perfectly free and heart-whole, and recognized how entirely she fulfilled it, he could not fail to transfer his loyalty from the shadow to the substance. By dint of such clever logic, she gradually pushed close the gates of hope, which she had allowed to stand ajar for a short time.

She knew, moreover, that Bertram Linton had written, telling his friend the news ; for he had spoken openly of having received no answer to the letter in which he had asked Calvert to be best man upon a great occasion which was to come off some time in December. Elizabeth's ready imagination had an explanation for this too, and suggested that the continued delay abroad was occasioned by the tidings which had reached him ; while she fancied vividly the way that he would wrestle with himself over the acceptance or refusal to be present at a moment which would crystallize his disappointment into irrevocableness.

Fortunately for Elizabeth, her work was absorbing and unremitting during the slowly wintering autumn days. It was only at times that the stone in her breast weighed with almost unbearable heaviness, and the strain at her throat made her fear a weak surrender to lonely tears.



CHAPTER XVI

“AS HAVING NOTHING,—YET POSSESSING ALL
THINGS ”

“ Time would tell
And the end declare what man for you,
What woman for me was the choice of God.”

IT was just five o'clock on a foggy day, well towards the end of November. The library of the Oxford and Cambridge Club on Pall Mall was completely deserted, except for an intent figure bending over a desk in one corner. At his elbow lay several sheets of paper, covered with quick, close, business-looking writing. His attitude was so concentrated, and the air of absorption so complete, as his pen travelled swiftly from side to side over the page now under his hand, that one

would have thought him deep in an arduous undertaking that would not be finished for hours. It would have seemed hopeless to expect a speedy ending from such rapt absorption.

But suddenly his pen reached the end of the page, and wrote the name Calvert Dodge at the bottom, with the same unhesitating decision. And in another minute, the loose sheets were gathered together, enclosed in an official envelope and addressed to the Times Building, New York City, U. S. A. Then, on the instant, the businesslike mood was vanished, shed like a garment, and a lazy look filled his eyes as he tipped his chair back and whistled thoughtfully. Anyone regarding him closely would have been struck with certain weary little lines about those gray eyes, which seemed to be unnatural to the energetic face.

"Pretty good of old Haywood to give me the run of the Club this way," he ejaculated appreciatively, letting his gaze wander over the comfortable, softly lighted room. Then, consulting

his watch, he whistled again, this time in surprise at the lateness of the hour.

Twenty minutes afterward he entered the office of the Langham, and stopped for his mail on the way up-stairs to his room. There were several business communications forwarded by his banker, and a package of New York papers. As he ran his eyes over them with mechanical recognition, he came across an envelope whose face was so crossed and re-crossed and criss crossed with different addresses, that the original one was almost illegible. The whole thing was interesting as it contained the names of every place he had been to since the first of October, and he puzzled them out amusedly before he opened it. Then he drew out the enclosure, and started sharply as he recognized the writing to be Bertram Linton's.

Quick on the recognition came a knife-like thrust at thought of the news which this letter from uncommunicative Bertram might contain, and he braced himself consciously for its peru-

sal ; while around his eyes became more visible the tired lines,—which seemed to prove that the old thoughts which had imprinted them were again uppermost in his mind. This is what he read :

“ DEAR CALVERT :—You guessed my secret last summer, and I’m not in the least ashamed of being so patently in love that I advertised it on my countenance. I could n’t talk about it then, it was all too uncertain, but now I am free to tell you that the summer of my discontent has ended gloriously, and that I am engaged to the dearest, the best, and finest little woman in the world ! You wished me luck, long ago, so I am sure of your hearty pleasure and sympathy over my happiness. It makes the world over for a man, Calvert. Great Heavens ! What have I done that I should be so blessed ? How can I ever hope to be worthy ? But you see I cannot write sanely about it yet, so I will tell you, without further ado, that the object of this letter is to secure your services as best man for an uncertain day

in the certain month of December. We are both determined to have you, old man. She likes you so much already and longs to know you better. To tell the whole truth, Calvert, caring for you and admiring you as I do, I fairly shook in my shoes when I knew you two were going to meet. It seemed impossible that she could be guilty of the bad taste to prefer me after that! I can only fall back for all explanation on the old saw, ‘First come, first served!’ It must be pretty near time for you to be coming back, so I shall expect an answer in *propria persona* before long. I know you are too busy driving a pen to have time for letter-writing. With warmest regards and best wishes from us both, I am ever,

“Your faithful old friend,

“BERTRAM LINTON.

“P. S.—The studio on 57th Street is unusually attractive this fall, and Miss Wallace’s work grows better every day. Great things are predicted for her. I wonder—but no, it’s none of my business, old man! B. L.”

The blow had fallen at last, then ! The note dropped from the man's hand, and his eyes gazed unseeingly ahead for a long time. He was going over again, for the hundredth time, the old battle of rebellion. How could it be, how could it be, that his whole nature had recognized and clamored for a heart that was given to another ! How could it be that the certainty he felt with every faculty he possessed, that Elizabeth Wallace was the one woman in the world who could satisfy him, was not God-given, incontrovertible !

Hitherto, the hard things of Calvert's life—the breaking up of his beautiful old Virginia home at an age when most boys are entirely care-free ; the struggle for the college education which was considered by his people one of the bare necessities of life ; the deep sorrow over the death of his parents, which occurred during his senior year, and the subsequent trials and hardships of an up-hill literary career, added to a debt incubus honorably shouldered after his father's death—had been to this man,

in whose Southern nature there was mingled a curiously alien, Puritan strain, but so many opportunities for exercising and strengthening his moral fibre. What he had endured, although it had caused acute suffering and severities, he had borne nobly and unquestioningly. It had been even with a sort of austere exaltation that he had kissed the rod and hailed it as a staff with whose aid he could mount from strength to strength.

Only from this last cup which he had thought held to his lips had he shrunk with bitter insurrection. His mind harked back grimly and paced it all over again. God help him! He knew now that his scruples had been all on Bertram's account—Bertram, whom he felt it only honorable to leave with a fair field—and that deep down in his heart of hearts had lain waiting a something which seemed to whisper that there was a chance that Bertram Linton, rich and clever and attractive as he was, would have his opportunity and lose it, and after that! — It had been cow-

ardice on his part to stay away, shameful fear that within reach of her he could not trust himself to stand passively by and watch another man try to win her, while he was bound by nothing but a flimsy code of honor. For this he had lengthened his stay abroad and accepted an offer to remain and do further work for his paper on the continent, in connection with the Grecian troubles, saying fiercely to himself, that when the time of his second contract was up he would go home, and if Linton had not then made definite headway, he would consider that he had allowed him all the opportunity that the strictest honor demanded, and let come what would, he would try his own luck.

He recalled his late wanderings, and smiled a bitter little smile as he realized that the things which stood out most vividly in his multifiform impressions of sight-seeing were, first, the little French town in Brittany which he had hunted through for the originals to the sketches in a certain Brittany portfolio as

zealously as a devout Catholic looks for historic shrines ; and, later, those parts of Paris which she had made real and populated for him, in their many talks. A heterogeneous collection these—St. Cloud, and the Madeleine, the Cluny, and certain picked galleries in the endless Louvre ; one corner of the Luxembourg, and, dearest of all, the dingy Académie Mont Parnasse and the Square du Froissart,—inside of whose gated courtyard he had lingered, looking up at the fifth-floor windows of Numero Dix, until the concierge had noticed him and demanded rather uncivilly his business there.

Calvert smiled again as he remembered how accommodating and urbane this same concierge had grown upon his asking if there were apartments to let in Numero Dix. “ Mais oui, Monsieur, assurément ! Il y en a deux, le cinquième étage et le quatrième aussi, à louer. Mais tres joli ! tous qui est beau ! ”—and his air of suave affability when Calvert had examined minutely and with obvious approval the

microscopic apartment on the fifth floor where Elizabeth had lived and studied and been happy or miserable for six long months ! He had not been able to repress a question about previous tenants, and the garrulous concierge had assured him, with gesturing hands and shoulders, how satisfied, one might say how enchanted, the last ones had been. " An American Madame, one of monsieur's charming compatriots, with her daughter—ah, Monsieur, her daughter so amiable and so beautiful ! who studied the art, all near ! " Poor man ! he had laid himself out in the certainty of having entrapped another American tenant, whose value he had afterward gauged with reference to the tip which Calvert had bestowed upon him at parting, and which he hoped to see frequently duplicated in a golden future.

The self-scorning little smile still lingered on Calvert's lips, as he recollected how his unbridled fancy had placed her beside him in those tiny rooms ; and how he had allowed himself to indulge the reckless dream that,

the gracious years having performed the all-impossible miracle, they two might be together for another happy winter of work and play in the selfsame little apartment *au cinquième*!

Mad, mad dreams!—But oh, how they were sweet! The familiar lines came back to him,

“I shall be satisfied,
If only the dreams abide.”

And now he was not only bereft of the actual, but must also strip himself ruthlessly of the dreams which had been his only solace. Well, the limit he had set himself was up! The work was done. He had despatched the last instalment that very day. Yes—he would go back and be best man for Bertram Linton. It was peculiarly fitting that he inflict this punishment on himself for his rash audacity in daring to so dream.

He picked up the letter and read it once more. This time, something strange in the postscript struck him; and he quickly re-read the whole letter anxiously and attentively. But no, it was too utterly, too wildly improba-

ble! He would not allow a doubt to enter his mind. Upon which very sensible determination, he proceeded to erect a towering but inverted pyramid of doubt, having for apex that insecure, that infinitesimal evidence—till his very soul was sick with a torturing uncertainty.

Ten days later, about half-past three in the afternoon, a newly arrived traveller landed in New York City, and made his way straight to the office of one Bertram Linton. At his entrance, Bertram sprang to his outstretched hand with a cry of very real surprise and delight, and stood wringing it with an apparently endless heartiness, while he deluged the arrival with eager questions in a breezy succession, very unlike his old, deliberate self.

“How are you, old man? Where’d you drop from? When did you arrive? Where’ve you been? I’m awfully glad to see you, Dodge. But you look a bit seedy. Had a bad crossing? And *did* you get my letter?”

“Yes, I got it—after a while,” returned Calvert, with a slow nervousness. “It had followed me pretty nearly all over Europe first, though. See here, Bertie, you’re a typical blind man! I wonder if you know you wrote a whole, long letter, asking to be congratulated, and never mentioned your *fiancé’s* name?”

Bertram opened wide his honest blue eyes. “No, by Jove! Did I, though? That was just like my idiocy. But, I say, it made no difference—you knew whom I meant well enough.”

“Well, of course I imagined. It could only have been one person!” said Calvert, growing a little pale beneath the ocean tan.

“I should say so! Ever since I laid my eyes on her, Joan Whetmore has been the only woman in the world to me, bless her!”

Calvert went still paler, and caught his friend’s arm in a close grip. “*Joan Whetmore!*” he said unsteadily; “for Heaven’s

sake, man, tell me at once, is it *Miss Whetmore* to whom you are engaged?"

"Why, of course it's Miss Whetmore," repeated Linton, astounded at this vehemence. "Who else on earth——?"

"I—I thought it was Miss Wallace," said Calvert tensely. "Never mind the hundred and one reasons now. Forgive me, Bertram old fellow, but this has meant everything in the world to me. I've been"—he laughed excitedly—"holding off on your account for the past six months, more or less; and I can't stand it a minute longer. I'm going to the studio to see her as fast as a cab can take me there." He held out his hand with a wistful smile, in which hope and doubt were equally blended. "Wish *me* luck, old man!"

Linton wrung it strongly, his head in a maze of mystified appreciation of what the man before him had been through. "*That* I do," he said forcibly.

The drive which followed was one which Calvert Dodge will never forget; now terrify-

ingly swift—as his traitorous doubts, his sense of unworthiness, obtained the upper hand; now torturingly slow—as his suddenly emancipated heart, his eager intuition, downed his more cowardly, more timorous self.

Twenty minutes later the drive was over—*so soon!—at last!* And Calvert stood, as on that first memorable occasion, outside of an oaken door, his heart knocking so loudly against his side that it seemed superfluous to announce his coming by further means.

On the other side of that uncommunicative door, in the early gathering gloaming, before a little open fire of glowing coals, sat a dusk-haired, dusk-eyed girl. The firelight touched her face and hands with a warmth they had lacked of late, and on the top of her head the cool blueness from the wide skylight lay lovingly, like a soft halo. Motionless, passive, Elizabeth sat there, thinking “long, long thoughts.”

Suddenly she raised her head with the swift, startled air of some sensitive wood creature,

her dreaming eyes dilating with an intent listening. What had she heard?—Surely no audible sound had broken the palpitating stillness of the shadowy room.

“Come!” she called, in a low, vibrant voice.

Not so low but that it pierced through gloom and oaken panelling to the listening ears without. For the space of a long heart-throb Calvert Dodge paused. Then, dropping the hand he had raised to knock, with a swift, noiseless turn of his wrist he opened the studio door, disclosing through the dimness the shadowy figure by the fire.

As he closed it again behind him he shut away the world. For him, for him alone of all the world, remained

———“the grace
On Love's uplifted face,
And the slow, sweet joy-dawn there
Under the dusk of her hair.”

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